Bussy D'Amboise - pg. 83-

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A CRITICAL ESSAY.

BY

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THE fame which from his own day to ours has never wholly failed to attend the memory of George Chapman has yet been hitherto of a looser and vaguer kind than floats about the memory of most other poets. In the great revival of studious enthusiasm for the works of the many famous men who won themselves a name during the seventy-five memorable years of his laborious life, the mass of his original work has been left too long unnoticed and unhonoured. Our "Homer-Lucan," as he was happily termed by Daniel in that admirable *Defence of Rhyme* which remains to this day one of the

most perfect examples of sound and temperate sense, of pure style and just judgment, to be found in the literature of criticism, has received it may be not much less than his due meed of praise for those Homeric labours by which his name is still chiefly known; but what the great translator could accomplish when fighting for his own hand few students of English poetry have been careful to inquire or competent to appreciate.

And yet there are not many among his various and unequal writings which we can open without some sense of great qualities in the workman whose work lies before us. There are few poets from whose remains a more copious and noble anthology of detached beauties might be selected. He has a singular force and depth of moral thought, a constant energy and intensity of expression, an occasional delicacy and perfection of fanciful or reflective beauty, which should have ensured him a place in the front rank at least of gnomic poets. It is true that his "wisdom entangles itself in over-niceness;" that his philosophy is apt to lose its way among brakes of digression and jungles of paradox; that

his subtle and sleepless ingenuity can never resist the lure of any quaint or perverse illustration which may start across its path from some obscure corner at the unluckiest and unlikeliest time; that the rough and barren byways of incongruous allusion, of unseasonable reflection or preposterous and grotesque symbolism, are more tempting to his feet than the highway of art, and the brushwood or the morass of metaphysics seems often preferable in his eyes to the pastures or the gardens of poetry. But from first to last the grave and frequent blemishes of his genius bear manifestly more likeness to the deformities of a giant than to the malformations of a dwarf, to the overstrained muscles of an athlete than to the withered limbs of a weakling.

He was born between Spenser and Shakespeare, before the first dawn of English tragedy with the morning star of Marlowe. Five years later that great poet began a life more brief, more glorious and more fruitful in proportion to its brevity than that of any among his followers except Beaumont and Shelley: each of these leaving at the close of some thirty years of life a fresh crown of immor-

tality to the national drama founded by the first-born of the three. A few months more, and Shakespeare was in the world; ten years further, and Ben Jonson had followed. This latter poet, the loving and generous panegyrist of Chapman, was therefore fifteen years younger than his friend, who was thus twenty years older than Fletcher, and twenty-seven years older than Beaumont. All these immortals he outlived on earth, with the single exception of Jonson, who died but three years after the death of the elder poet. No man could ever look round upon a more godlike company of his fellows; yet we have no record of his relations with any of these but Jonson and Fletcher.

The date of Chapman's birth is significant, and should be borne in mind when we attempt to determine his rank among the poets of that golden age. From the splendid and triumphant example of the one great poet whose popularity his earlier years must have witnessed, he may have caught a contagious love of allegory and moral symbolism; he certainly caught nothing of the melodious ease and delicate grace which gave Spenser his su-

premacy in the soft empire of that moonlight-coloured world where only his genius was at home. Chapman's allegories are harsh, crude, and shapeless; for the sweet airs and tender outlines and floating Elysian echoes of Spenser's vision, he has nothing to offer in exchange but the thick rank mist of a lowland inhabited by monstrous hybrids and haunted by jarring discords.

Behind Spenser came Sidney and the Euphuists; and in their schools neither Chapman nor any other was likely to learn much good. The natural defects and dangers of his genius were precisely of the kind most likely to increase in the contagion of such company. He had received from nature at his birth a profuse and turbid imagination, a fiery energy and restless ardour of moral passion and spiritual ambition, with a plentiful lack of taste and judgment, and a notable excess of those precious qualities of pride and self-reliance which are at once needful to support and liable to misguide an artist on his way of work. The two main faults of the school of poets which blossomed and faded from the brief flower of court favour during the youth of

Chapman were tedious excess of talk and grotesque encumbrance of imagery; and Chapman had unhappily a native tendency to the grotesque and tedious, which all his study of the highest and purest literature in the world was inadequate to suppress or to chasten. For all his labours in the field of Greek translation, no poet was ever less of a Greek in style or spirit. He enters the serene temples and handles the holy vessels of Hellenic art with the stride and the grasp of a high-handed and high-minded barbarian.

Nevertheless, it is among the schools of Greek poetry that we must look for a type of the class to which this poet belongs. In the great age of Greece he would have found a place of some credit among the ranks of the gnomic poets, and written much grave and lofty verse of a moral and political sort in praise of a powerful conservative oligarchy, and in illustration of the public virtues which are fostered and the public vices which are repressed under the strong sharp tutelage of such a government. At the many-headed beast of democracy he would have discharged the keenest arrows of his declamation,

and sought shelter at need from its advance behind the shield of some tutelary Pittacus or Pisistratus. What Pope said of Chapman's Homer may be applied with a difference to his original poetry; it might not be inaccurate to say that he often writes, not indeed as Homer, but as Theognis might have written before he came to years of discretion. He shows, we must admit, only in a few couplets or brief paragraphs the pure and luminous charm of perfect speech proper to a Greek moralist of the elegiac school; but he has more of a certain fire and force of fancy than we should look for in a poet of that order, where with far less of thick acrid smoke there is also less real heat and flame perceptible than struggles here through the fume and fog of a Cimmerian style. The dialect of Chapman's poems is undoubtedly portentous in its general barbarism; and that study of purer writers, which might in another case have been trusted to correct and chasten the turgid and fiery vigour of a barbarian imagination, seems too often to have encrusted the mind with such arrogance and the style with such pedantry as to make certain of these poems, full of

earnest thought, of passionate energy, of turnid and fitful eloquence, the most indigestible food ever served up to the guests of a man of genius by the master of the feast. Under no circumstances, probably, would Chapman have been always a pure and harmonious writer, capable of casting into fit and radiant form the dark hard masses of his deep and ardent thought, of uttering the weighty and noble things he had to say in a fluent and lucid style; but as it was, he appears from first to last to have erected his natural defects into an artificial system, and cultivated his incapacities as other men cultivate their faculties.

"That Poesy should be as pervial as oratory, and plainness her special ornament, were the plain way to barbarism:" so he tells us at the very outset of his career, in a letter of dedication prefixed to the second of his published poems, and containing several excellent reflections on the folly of those who expect grave and deep matter of poetry to be so handled that he who runs or lounges need not pause or rouse himself to read. "That *energia*, or clearness of representation, required in absolute

poems, is not the perspicuous delivery of a low invention; but high and hearty invention expressed in most significant and unaffected phrase." That is admirably said; but when we turn to the practical comment supplied by the poetry which illustrates this critical profession of faith, we find it hard to stomach the preacher's application of his text. In this same dedication, which is well worth note and regard from all students of Chapman—and with all his shortcomings we may reasonably hope that the number of them will increase, with the first issue of his complete works, among all professed students of English poetry at its highest periods—he proceeds to a yet more distinct avowal of his main principle; and it is something to know that he had any, though the knowledge be but too likely to depress the interest and dishearten the sympathy of a reader who but for this assurance of design would probably have supposed that great part of these poems had been written in a chaotic jargon, where grammar, metre, sense, sound, coherence and relevancy are hurled together on a heap of jarring and hurtling ruins, rather because the author wanted skill or care

to write better, than because he took pains to achieve so remarkable a result by the observance of fixed means for the attainment of a fixed purpose. It should seem to be with malice aforethought that he sets himself to bring to perfection the qualities of crabbed turgidity and barbarous bombast with which nature had but too richly endowed him, mingling these among many better gifts with so cunning a hand and so malignant a liberality as well-nigh to stifle the good seed of which yet she had not been sparing.

"There is no confection made to last, but is admitted more cost and skill than presently-to-be-used simples; and in my opinion that which being with a little endeavour searched adds a kind of majesty to poesy is better than that which every cobbler may sing to his patch. Obscurity in affection of words and indigested conceits is pedantical and childish; but where it shroudeth itself in the heart of his subject, uttered with fitness of figure and expressive epithets, with that darkness will I still labour to be shadowed." This promise, we may add, was most religiously kept; but the labour was

at least superfluous. To translate out of the crude and incoherent forms of expression in which they now lie weltering the scholastic subtleties and metaphysical symbols which beset the reader's diverted and distracted attention at every step through the jungle of these poems, and thus to render what he had to say into some decent order and harmony, he would have found a harder if a more profitable labour than to fling forth his undigested thoughts and incongruous fancies in a mass of rich inextricable confusion for them to sift and sort who list. But this, we see, was far enough from his purpose. He takes his motto from Persius:—

> "Quis leget hæc? Nemo, hercule, nemo;
> Vel duo vel nemo;"

and the label thus affixed to the forehead of one volume might have served for almost any other of his poems. His despair of a fit audience is less remarkable than the bitter and violent expression of his contempt for general opinion. "Such is the wilful poverty of judgments, wandering like passportless men in contempt of the divine discipline of

poesy, that a man may well fear to frequent their walks. The profane multitude I hate, and only consecrate my strange poems to those searching spirits whom learning hath made noble, and nobility sacred." And this is throughout his manner of reference to the tastes and judgments of those common readers in whose eyes he took such less than little pains to make his work even passably attractive that we may presume this acrid tone of angry contempt, half haughty and half petulant in its endless repetition, to have had in it some salt of sincerity as well as some underlying sense of conscious failure in the pursuit of that success on the image or idea of which he turns and tramples with passionate scorn. It is not usually till he has failed to please that a man discovers how despicable and undesirable a thing it would have been to succeed.

No student, however warm his goodwill and admiration for the high-toned spirit and genius of Chapman, will be disposed to wonder that he found cause to growl and rail at the neglect and distaste of the multitude for his writings. Demosthenes, according to report, taught himself to speak with

pebbles in his mouth; but it is presumable that he also learnt to dispense with their aid before he stood up against Æschines or Hyperides on any great occasion of public oratory. Our philosophic poet, on the other hand, before addressing such audience as he may find, is careful always to fill his mouth till the jaws are stretched wellnigh to bursting with the largest, roughest, and most angular of polygonal flintstones that can be hewn or dug out of the mine of human language; and as fast as one voluminous sentence or unwieldy paragraph has emptied his mouth of the first batch of barbarisms, he is no less careful to refill it before proceeding to a fresh delivery. I sincerely think and hope that no poems with a tithe of their genuine power and merit were ever written on such a plan or after such a fashion as the *Shadow of Night* or *Andromeda Liberata* of Chapman. It is not merely the heavy and convulsive movement of the broken and jarring sentences, the hurried broken-winded rhetoric that seems to wheeze and pant at every painful step, the incessant byplay of incongruous digressions and impenetrable allusions, that make the first reading of these poems

as tough and tedious a task for the mind as oakum-picking or stone-breaking can be for the body. Worse than all this is the want of any perceptible centre towards which these tangled and ravelled lines of thought may seem at least to converge. We see that the author has thought hard and felt deeply; we apprehend that he is charged as it were to the muzzle with some ardent matter of spiritual interest, of which he would fain deliver himself in explosive eloquence; we perceive that he is angry, ambitious, vehement and arrogant; no pretender, but a genuine seer or Pythian bemused and stifled by the oracular fumes which choke in its very utterance the message they inspire, and for ever preclude the seer from becoming properly the prophet of their mysteries:

> "We understand a fury in his words,
> But not the words;"

and the fury which alone we understand waxes tenfold hotter at our incompetence to comprehend what the orator is incompetent to express. He foams at the mouth with rage through all the flints

and pebbles of hard language which he spits forth, so to say, in the face of "the prejudicate and peremptory reader" whose ears he belabours with "very bitter words," and with words not less turgid than were hurled by Pistol at the head of the recalcitrant and contumelious Mistress Tearsheet: nor assuredly had the poet much right to expect that they would be received by the profane multitude with more reverence and humility than was the poetic fury of "such a fustian rascal" by that "honest, virtuous, civil gentlewoman."

The charge of obscurity is perhaps of all charges the likeliest to impair the fame or to imperil the success of a rising or an established poet. It is as often misapplied by hasty or ignorant criticism as any other on the roll of accusations; and was never misapplied more persistently and perversely than to an eminent writer of our own time. The difficulty found by many in certain of Mr. Browning's works arises from a quality the very reverse of that which produces obscurity properly so called. Obscurity is the natural product of turbid forces and confused ideas; of a feeble and clouded or of a

vigorous but unfixed and chaotic intellect. Such a poet as Lord Brooke, for example—and I take George Chapman and Fulke Greville to be of all English poets the two most genuinely obscure in style upon whose works I have ever adventured to embark in search of treasure hidden beneath the dark gulfs and crossing currents of their rocky and weedy waters, at some risk of my understanding being swept away by the groundswell—such a poet, overcharged with overflowing thoughts, is not sufficiently possessed by any one leading idea, or attracted towards any one central point, to see with decision the proper end and use with resolution the proper instruments of his design. Now if there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. To charge him with obscurity is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind or complain of the sluggish action of the telegraphic wire. He is something too much the reverse of obscure; he is too brilliant and subtle for the ready reader of a ready

writer to follow with any certainty the track of an intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity, or even to realize with what spider-like swiftness and sagacity his building spirit leaps and lightens to and fro and backward and forward as it lives along the animated line of its labour, springs from thread to thread and darts from centre to circumference of the glittering and quivering web of living thought woven from the inexhaustible stores of his perception and kindled from the inexhaustible fire of his imagination. He never thinks but at full speed; and the rate of his thought is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a waggon or the speed of a telegraph to that of a railway. It is hopeless to enjoy the charm or to apprehend the gist of his writings except with a mind thoroughly alert, an attention awake at all points, a spirit open and ready to be kindled by the contact of the writer's. To do justice to any book which deserves any other sort of justice than that of the fire or the waste-paper basket, it is necessary to read it in the fit frame of mind; and the proper mood in which to

study for the first time a book of Mr. Browning's is the freshest, clearest, most active mood of the mind in its brightest and keenest hours of work. Read at such a time, and not "with half-shut eyes falling asleep in a half-dream," it will be found (in Chapman's phrase) "pervial" enough to any but a sluggish or a sandblind eye; but at no time and in no mood will a really obscure writer be found other than obscure. The difference between the two is the difference between smoke and lightning; and it is far more difficult to pitch the tone of your thought in harmony with that of a foggy thinker, than with that of one whose thought is electric in its motion. To the latter we have but to come with an open and pliant spirit, untired and undisturbed by the work or the idleness of the day, and we cannot but receive a vivid and active pleasure in following the swift and fine radiations, the subtle play and keen vibration of its sleepless fires; and the more steadily we trace their course the more surely do we see that these forked flashes of fancy and changing lights of thought move unerringly around one centre, and

strike straight in the end to one point. Only random thinking and random writing produce obscurity; and these are the radical faults of Chapman's style of poetry. We find no obscurity in the lightning, whether it play about the heights of metaphysical speculation or the depths of character and motive; the mind derives as much of vigorous enjoyment from the study by such light of the one as of the other. The action of so bright and swift a spirit gives insight as it were to the eyes and wings to the feet of our own; the reader's apprehension takes fire from the writer's, and he catches from a subtler and more active mind the infection of spiritual interest; so that any candid and clear-headed student finds himself able to follow for the time in fancy the lead of such a thinker with equal satisfaction on any course of thought or argument; when he sets himself to refute Renan through the dying lips of St. John or to try conclusions with Strauss in his own person, and when he flashes at once the whole force of his illumination full upon the inmost thought and mind of the most infamous criminal, a

Guido Franceschini or a Louis Bonaparte, compelling the black and obscene abyss of such a spirit to yield up at last the secret of its profoundest sophistries, and let forth the serpent of a soul that lies coiled under the most intricate and supple reasonings of self-justified and self-conscious crime. And thanks to this very quality of vivid spiritual illumination, we are able to see by the light of the author's mind without being compelled to see with his eyes, or with the eyes of the living mask which he assumes for his momentary impersonation of saint or sophist, philosopher or malefactor; without accepting one conclusion, conceding one point, or condoning one crime. It is evident that to produce any such effect requires above all things brightness and decision as well as subtlety and pliancy of genius; and this is the supreme gift and distinctive faculty of Mr. Browning's mind. If indeed there be ever any likelihood of error in his exquisite analysis, he will doubtless be found to err rather through excess of light than through any touch of darkness; we may doubt, not without a sense that the fittest mood of criti-

cism might be that of a self-distrustful confidence in the deeper intuition of his finer and more perfect knowledge, whether the perception of good or evil would actually be so acute in the mind of the supposed reasoner; whether for instance a veritable household assassin, a veritable saviour of society or other incarnation of moral pestilence, would in effect see so clearly and so far, with whatever perversion or distortion of view, into the recesses of the pit of hell wherein he lives and moves and has his being; recognising with quick and delicate apprehension what points of vantage he must strive to gain, what outposts of self-defence he may hope to guard, in the explanation and vindication of the motive forces of his nature and the latent mainspring of his deeds. This fineness of intellect and dramatic sympathy which is ever on the watch to anticipate and answer the unspoken imputations and prepossessions of his hearer, the very movements of his mind, the very action of his instincts, is perhaps a quality hardly compatible with a nature which we might rather suppose, judging from public evidence and

historic indication, to be sluggish and short-sighted, "a sly slow thing with circumspective eye" that can see but a little way immediately around it, but neither before it nor behind, above it nor beneath; and whose introspection, if ever that eye were turned inward, would probably be turbid, vacillating, cloudy and uncertain as the action of a spirit incapable of self-knowledge but not incapable of self-distrust, timid and impenitent, abased and unabashed, remorseless but not resolute, shameless but not fearless. If such be in reality the public traitor and murderer of a nation, we may fairly infer that his humbler but not viler counterpart in private life will be unlikely to exhibit a finer quality of mind or a clearer faculty of reason. But this is a question of realism which in no wise affects the spiritual value and interest of such work as Mr. Browning's. What is important for our present purpose is to observe that this work of exposition by soliloquy and apology by analysis can only be accomplished or undertaken by the genius of a great special pleader, able to fling himself with all his heart and all his brain, with all the force of his intellect and

all the strength of his imagination, into the assumed part of his client; to concentrate on the cause in hand his whole power of illustration and illumination, and bring to bear upon one point at once all the rays of his thought in one focus. Apart from his gift of moral imagination, Mr. Browning has in the supreme degree the qualities of a great debater or an eminent leading counsel; his finest reasoning has in its expression and development something of the ardour of personal energy and active interest which inflames the argument of a public speaker; we feel, without the reverse regret of Pope, how many a firstrate barrister or parliamentary tactician has been lost in this poet. The enjoyment that his best and most characteristic work affords us is doubtless far other than the delight we derive from the purest and highest forms of lyric or dramatic art; there is a radical difference between the analyst and the dramatist, the pleader and the prophet. It would be clearly impossible for the subtle tongue which can undertake at once the apology and the anatomy of such motives as may be assumed to impel or to support a

"Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau" on his ways of thought and action, ever to be touched with the fire which turns to a sword or to a scourge the tongue of a poet to whom it is given to utter as from Patmos or from Sinai the word that fills all the heaven of song with the lightnings and thunders of chastisement. But in place of lyric rapture or dramatic action we may profitably enjoy the unique and incomparable genius of analysis which gives to these special pleadings such marvellous life and interest as no other workman in that kind was ever or will ever again be able to give; we may pursue with the same sense of strenuous delight in a new exercise of intellect and interest the slender and luminous threads of speculation wound up into a clue with so fine a skill and such happy sleight of hand in *Fifine at the Fair* or the sixth book of *Sordello,* where the subtle secret of spiritual weakness in a soul of too various powers and too restless refinement is laid bare with such cunning strength of touch, condemned and consoled with such far-sighted compassion and regret.

This last-named poem has been held especially

liable to the charge which we have seen to be especially inapplicable to the general work of its author; but although the manner of its construction should not seem defensible, as to me I may confess that it does not, it would be an utter misuse of terms to find in obscurity of thought or language the cause of this perceptible defect. The point of difference was accurately touched by the exquisite critical genius of Coleridge when he defined the style of Persius as "hard—not obscure:" for this is equally true in the main of the style of *Sordello;* only the hard metal is of a different quality and temper, as the intellect of the English thinker is far wider in its reach, far subtler in its action and its aim, than that of the Roman stoic. The error, if I may take on myself to indicate what I conceive to be the error, of style in *Sordello* is twofold; it is a composite style, an amalgam of irreconcilable materials that naturally refuse to coalesce; and, like a few of the author's minor poems, it is written at least partially in shorthand, which a casual reader is likely to mistake for cipher, and to complain accordingly that the key should be withheld from him. A

curious light is thrown on the method of its composition by the avowal put forth in the dedication of a reissue of this poem, that since its first adventure on publicity the writer had added and had cancelled a notable amount of illustrative or explanatory matter, preferring ultimately to leave his work such a poem as the few must like, rather than such as the many might. Against this decision no one has a right to appeal; and there is doubtless much in the work as it stands that all imaginative thinkers and capable students of poetry most assuredly must regard with much more than mere liking; but when the reader is further invited to observe that the sole aim kept in sight, the sole object of interest pursued by the author, was the inner study of an individual mind, the occult psychology of a single soul, the personal pathology of a special intelligence, he has a right to suggest that in that case there is too much, and in any other case there is not enough, of external illustration and the byplay of alien actions and passions which now serve only to perplex the scheme they ought to explain. If it was the author's purpose to give to his philosophic poem a

background of historic action, to relieve against the broad mass and movement of outer life the solitary process of that inward and spiritual tragedy which was the main occupation of his mind and art, to set the picture of a human spirit in the frame of circumstances within which it may actually have been environed and beset with offers of help, with threats and temptations, doubts and prospects and chances of the day it had on earth,—if this was his purpose, then surely there is not here enough of such relief to illustrate a design which there is more than enough of it to confuse. But if, as we are now obliged to assume, the author's purpose was studiously and strenuously to restrict within the limits of inner spiritual study the interest and the motive of his work, to concentrate our attention with his own upon the growth and the fortune, the triumph and the failure, the light and the darkness of this one human spirit, the soul of a man of genius fallen upon evil days and elect for great occasions and begirt with strange perplexities, then surely there is here far too much of external distraction and diversion for the reader's mind even to apprehend the

issue, much less to comprehend the process, of this inner tragic action. The poem, in short, is like a picture in which the background runs into the foreground, the figures and the landscape confound each other for want of space and proportion, and there is no middle distance discernible at all. It is but a natural corollary to this general error that the body like the spirit of the poem, its form not less than its thought, should halt between two or three diverse ways, and that the style should too often come to the ground between two stools or more; being as it is neither a dramatic nor a narrative style, neither personal nor impersonal, neither lyric nor historic, but at once too much of all these and not enough of any. The result may be to the hasty reader no less repellent than the result of obscurity in thought or in style; but from identity of effect we are not to infer an identity of cause.

The best parts of this poem also belong in substance always and sometimes in form to the class of monodramas or soliloquies of the spirit; a form to which the analytic genius of Mr. Browning leads him ever as by instinct to return, and in which

alone it finds play for its especial faculties and security against its especial liabilities to error and confusion of styles; a security for want of which his lyric and dramatic writing is apt to be neither dramatic nor lyrical, simply because of the writer's natural and inevitable tendency to analysis, which, by the nature of things as well as by the laws of art, can only explain and express itself either through the method of direct exposition or in the form of elaborate mental monologue. The whole argument of the sixth book is monodramatic; and its counterpart is to be sought in the most dramatic and to me the most delightful passage of equal length in the poem, the magnificent soliloquy of Salinguerra in the fourth book, full of the subtle life and reality and pathos which the author, to speak truth as it seems to me, too generally fails to transfer from monologue into dialogue, to translate into the sensible action and passion of tragedy, or adequately to express in fulness and fitness of lyric form. The finest and most memorable parts of his plays not less than of his poems are almost always reducible in their essence to what I

have called monodrama; and if cast into the monodramatic form common to all his later writings would have found a better if not a keener expression and left a clearer if not a deeper impression on the mind. For one example, the communing of old King Victor with himself on his return to the palace he has resigned is surely far more impressive and memorable to any reader than the rest of the play where his character is exhibited in the mutual action and reaction of dialogue among characters who seem unable to say rightly what they should say except when alone or secure from interruption. Even Chapman, from whom I may be thought to have wandered somewhat far in this inquiry as to what is or is not properly definable as obscurity, has in my judgment a sounder instinct of dramatic dialogue and movement than the illustrious writer who has carved out for himself in the second period of his career a new and better way to the end appointed by nature for the exercise of his highest powers; and Chapman was certainly not remarkable among the great men of his day for the specially dramatic bent of his genius.

I have dwelt thus long on a seemingly irrelevant and discursive inquiry because I could discover no method so fit to explain the nature of the fault I cannot but find in the poet of whom I have to speak, as by contrast of his work with the work of another, upon whom this fault has been wrongly charged by the inaccurate verdict of hasty judges. In answer to these I have shown that the very essence of Mr. Browning's aim and method, as exhibited in the ripest fruits of his intelligence, is such as implies above all other things the possession of a quality the very opposite of obscurity—a faculty of spiritual illumination rapid and intense and subtle as lightning, which brings to bear upon its central object by way of direct and vivid illustration every symbol and every detail on which its light is flashed in passing. Thus in *Fifine* the illustration derived from a visionary retrospect of Venice, and in *Sordello* the superb and wonderful comparison of the mental action of a man who puts by for a season the memories in which he has indulged for a moment before turning again to the day's work, with that of a fugitive slave who thinks over in a pause

of his flight and puts aside for more practical means of revenge the thought of enchantments "sovereign to plague his enemies," as he buckles himself again to the grim business of escape—these and other such illustrative passages are not more remarkable for the splendour of their imaginative quality than for the aptness of their cunning application and the direct light reflected from them on the immediate argument which is penetrated and vivified throughout by the insinuation and exploration of its radiance. Few poets, on the other hand, have been more unsparing in the use of illustration than Chapman; he flings about similes by the handful, many of them diffuse and elaborate in expression, most of them curiously thoughtful and ingenious, not a few of them eloquent and impressive; but in many cases they tend rather to distract the attention of the reader than to elucidate the matter of his study. To his first poem, short as it is, Chapman appends a glossary to explain the accumulated allusions of a mythological kind, with this note at the foot of it: "For the rest of his own invention, figures and similes, touching their aptness and novelty, he hath

not laboured to justify them, because he hopes they will be proved enough to justify themselves, and prove sufficiently authentical to such as understand them; for the rest, God help them" (for the poet evidently will not), "I cannot do as others, make day seem a lighter woman than she is, by painting her." The poem is however rich in fine verses which struggle into sight through the vaporous atmosphere of bombast and confusion; it is thoughtful, earnest, eloquent, with interludes of mere violent and dissonant declamation, and rarer flashes of high and subtle beauty. The licentious grammar and the shapeless structure of sentences that break all bounds of sense or harmony are faults that cannot be overlooked and must be condoned if we care to get at the kernel underlying these outer and inner husks of hard language. The same comment may be applied to the poems which follow; but the second Hymn, being longer and more discursive than the first, is more extravagant and incoherent, and its allegory more confused and difficult (whenever it is possible) to follow. Whether or not there be as usual any reference to Elizabeth

and her court under the likeness of Cynthia and her nymphs, or any allusion to English matters of contemporary interest, to perils and triumphs of policy or war, in the "sweet chase" of the transformed nymph Euthymia under the shape of a panther or a boar by the hounds of the goddess which pursue her into the impenetrable thicket where the souls of such as have revolted from the empire of Cynthia are held in bondage and torment, and whence the hunters who hew themselves a way into the covert are forced to recoil in horror, it is easier to conjecture than to determine: but the "fruitful island" to which the panther flies and eludes the hounds who track her by scent should be recognizable as England, "full of all wealth, delight, and empery;" though the sequel in which the panther, turned into a huger boar than that of Calydon, lays waste its "noblest mansions, gardens, and groves" through which the chase makes way, may seem now more impenetrable to human apprehension than the covert before described. Leaving however to others, without heed of the poet's expressed contempt for our "flesh-confounded souls," the task

of seeking a solution for riddles to us insoluble, we may note in this poem the first sign of that high patriotic quality which, though common to all the great of his generation, is more constantly perceptible in the nobler moods of Chapman's mind than in the work of many among his compeers. Especially in the reference of one elaborate simile to a campaign in the Netherlands, and the leadership of the English forces by

> "War's quick artisan,
> Fame-thriving Vere, that in those countries wan
> More fame than guerdon,"

we trace the lifelong interest taken by this poet in the fortunes of English fighting men in foreign wars and the generous impulse which moved him twenty-eight years later, at the age of sixty-three, to plead in earnest and fervent verses the cause of Sir Horatio Vere, then engaged 'with his poor handful of English' in the 'first act of the Thirty Years' War,'* ('besieged and distressed in Mainhem,' Chapman tells us,) in the ears of the courtiers of James I. A quainter example of this interest in the

* Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, book iii. chapter xvi.; vol. i. p. 329.

foreign campaigns of his countrymen may be found in the most untimely intrusion of such another simile into the third sestiad of *Hero and Leander*.

Before I take in hand the examination of Chapman's works as a dramatist, I may sum up the best and the worst I have to say of his earlier poems in the remark that on a first plunge into their depths even the reader most willing to accept and most anxious to admire the firstfruits of a poet's mind which he knows to have elsewhere put forth such noble fruit as Chapman's will be liable to do them less than justice until his own mind recovers from the shock given to his taste by the crabbed and bombastic verbiage, the tortuous and pedantic obscurity, the rigidity and the laxity of a style which moves as it were with a stiff shuffle, at once formal and shambling; which breaks bounds with a limping gait, and plays truant from all rule without any of the grace of freedom; wanders beyond law and straggles out of order at the halting pace of age and gravity, and in the garb of a schoolmaster plays the pranks of a schoolboy with a ponderous and lumbaginous license of movement, at once rheumatic and

erratic. With the recovery will probably come a reaction from this first impression; and the student will perhaps be more than sufficiently inclined to condone these shortcomings in favour of the merits they obscure at first sight; the wealth of imagery, the ardour of thought and feeling, the grave and vigorous harmony of the better parts, and the general impression left on us of communion with a strong, earnest, high-minded man of genius, set adrift without helm or rudder; of lofty instincts and large aspirations that run rather to leaf than to fruit for want of an eye to choose their proper aim, and a hand to use the means to it aright. The editor of the first and by no means the worst English anthology has gathered from these poems, and especially from *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, large handfuls of fine verses, which when thus culled out and bound up into separate sheaves make a better show than in the text where they lay entangled among weeds and briars. There are beauties enough lost in this thick and thorny jungle of scholastic sensuality to furnish forth a dozen or so of pilfering poeticules with abundance of purple

patches to be sewn on at intervals to the common texture of their style.

It is with a singular sense of jarring admiration and irritation that we find couplets and quatrains of the most noble and delicate beauty embedded in the cumbrous ore of crude pedantic jargon: but those who will may find throughout the two earliest publications of Chapman a profusion of good verses thickly scattered among an overgrowth of bad. The first poem however which leaves us on the whole with a general and equable impression of content is the small "epic song" or copy of verses on the second expedition to Guiana. Here the poet has got clear of those erotic subtleties and sensual metaphysics which were served up at his "banquet" in such clumsy vessels of the coarsest ware by the awkward and unwashed hands of an amorous pedant, soiling with the ink of the schools the lifted hem of the garment of love; he has found instead a fit argument for his genius in the ambition and adventure of his boldest countrymen, and applied himself to cheer and celebrate them "in no ignoble verse." The first brief paragraph alone is crabbed

and inflated in style; from thence to the end, with but slight breaks or jars, the strong and weighty verse steps out with masculine dignity, and delivers in clear grave accents its cordial message of praise and good cheer. At all times Chapman took occasion to approve himself a true son of the greatest age of Englishmen in his quick and fiery sympathy with the daring and the suffering of its warriors and adventurers; a sympathy which found vent at times where none but Chapman would have made room for it; witness the sudden and singular illustration, in his Epicede on the death of Prince Henry, of the popular anguish and dismay at that calamity by a "description of the tempest that cast Sir Th. Gates on the Bermudas, and the state of his ship and men, to this kingdom's plight applied in the Prince's death." It has been remarked by editors and biographers that between the years 1574, at or about which date, according to Anthony Wood, "he, being well-grounded in school learning, was sent to the university," and 1594, when he published his first poem, we have no trace or hint to guide us in conjecturing how his life was spent

from fifteen to thirty-five. This latter age is the least he can have attained by any computation at the time when he put forth his *Shadow of Night*, full of loud and angry complaints of neglect and slight endured at the hands of an unthankful and besotted generation; it is somewhat late in life for the first appearance of a poet, and the poem then issued is a more crude and chaotic performance than might be looked for from a writer who has no longer the plea of unripe age to put forward in excuse of the raw green fruits which he offers to the reader.

Dr. Elze, in the learned and ingenious essay prefixed to his edition of Chapman's *Alphonsus*, points out that from the internal evidence of that play 'we are driven to the alternative either of supposing Chapman to have been in Germany or of allowing him a German partner' (p. 33), and a little before observes that 'there is ample room between his leaving the university without a degree in 1576 or 1578 and his first acknowledged publication in 1594 even for a lengthened stay in Germany.' In default of evidence we might perhaps be permitted to throw out a guess that the future poet had in his

youth seen some service and been possibly an eye-witness of some part of the campaigns in the Low Countries to which he refers in a manner showing his intimate acquaintance with the details of an action on the 'most excellent river' Wall before 'stately-sighted sconce-torn Nimiguen,' fought between the cavalry of 'the Italian Duke' and the English leader, Sir Francis or Sir Horatio Vere, who drew the enemy's horse, by a feint made with his own, into an ambuscade of infantry by which they were put to rout. Both the text and the note appended show a willingness to display this knowledge of the strategy and geography of the skirmish with some ostentation of precision; his parting remark at the end of the note has a tone of satisfaction in the discovery of a new order of illustration. 'And these like similes, in my opinion, drawn from the honourable deeds of our noble countrymen, clad in comely habit of poesy, would become a poem as well as further-fetched grounds, if such as be poets nowadays would use them.' He was not himself, as we have seen, over careful to use them at the

right moment or turn them to the most natural account; but to the principle here advanced he remained stanch in his later writings.

It may be thought somewhat out of keeping with the general reputation of Chapman as a retired student of a grave and sober habit of life that he should be supposed to have ever taken any active part in a military campaign; but those were days when scholars and men of letters were not uncommonly found apt for employment in matters of war and policy, and gave good proof of a right to claim their place among other servants of the state for the performance of high patriotic duty; nor, unless we please, need we imagine Chapman to have served personally as a volunteer in the English ranks; but it is reasonable to conceive that either in person or by proxy he may have had special opportunities of studying the incidents of war in the Netherlands, which he would evidently have been mindful to make the most of and quick to put to use. It is also possible that his relations with the stage may have begun at an earlier date than has yet been traced; and as we know that in 1585, when Chap-

man was twenty-six years old, Leicester brought over to Holland a company of actors in his train when he set sail as commander of the forces despatched from England to the support of the States-General, and that others followed suit on their own score in succeeding years, those who are unwilling to allow him a chance of service as a soldier may prefer to conjecture that he was drawn to the seat of war by the more probable force of some poetic or theatrical connection with either the general's first troop of players or that which followed in its track five years later. That these earlier adventurers were succeeded by fresh companies in 1604 and 1605, and again forty years later, at an unpropitious date for actors in England, eleven years after the death of Chapman, I further learn from an article in the *Athenæum* (Sept. 5th, 1874) on Herr von Hellwald's 'History of the Stage in Holland;' and eight years later than the venture of the second company of players in 1590, we find Chapman classed by Meres 'among the best of our tragic writers for the stage,' and repeatedly entered on Henslowe's books as debtor to the manager for some small advance of

money on future dramatic work to be supplied to his company.

In any case it is remarkable that his first play should not have been brought on the stage till the poet was thirty-six, or published till he was rising forty; an age at which most men, who might have written such a play at sixteen, would have been unwilling to expose it to the light. It is even a more crude and graceless piece of work, if we consider it as designed for the stage, than his first venture of the preceding year if we regard it as intended for the study. The plot is more childish, though the language may be purer, than we find in the rudest sketches of Greene or Peele, whose day was now well over; and even for the firstfruits of 'a person of most reverend aspect, religious and temperate, qualities rarely meeting in a poet,' it will be admitted that the moral tone of Chapman's two earliest comedies is not remarkably high. The first deals solely with the impossible frauds, preposterous adulteries, and farcical murders committed by a disguised hero who assumes the mask of as many pseudonyms to perpetrate his crimes as ever were assumed in Old

or New Grub Street by a prudent member of the libellous order of rascally rhymesters to vent his villainies in shameful safety. The story is beneath the credulity of a nursery, and but for some detached passages of clear and vigorous writing the whole work might plausibly have been signed by any of the names under which a dunce of the order above-mentioned might think it wisest to put forth his lyrics or his lies. In the better passages, and noticeably in a description of jewels engraved with figures of the gods, we catch a faint echo of the "mighty line" in which Marlowe would lavish on such descriptions the wealth and strength, the majesty and the fancy, of his full imperial style.

The frank folly and reckless extravagance of incident which appear to have won for Chapman's first play the favour of an audience not remarkable, it should seem, for captious nicety of critical taste and judgment, are less perceptible in his second venture; but this also is a crude and coarse sample of workmanship. The characters are a confused crowd of rough sketches, whose thin outlines and faint colours are huddled together on a ragged can-

vass without order or proportion. There is some promise of humour in the part of a Puritan adulteress, but it comes to little or nothing; and the comedy rather collapses than concludes in a tangle of incongruous imbecilities and incoherent indecencies. The text is seemingly more corrupt than we find in Chapman's other plays, which are generally exempt from such gross and multitudinous misprints as deform the early editions of many Elizabethan dramatists; their chief defect is the confusion and the paucity of stage directions. In the opening speech of *An Humorous Day's Mirth*, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth verse, we must supply with some such reading as this the evident hiatus of sense and metre in the fifteenth:

> "But pure religion being but mental stuff,
> And sense, indeed, [being] all* [but] for itself,
> 'Tis to be doubted," etc.

The text and arrangement of the scenes through-

* Perhaps an adjective has here dropped out, and we might read the hemistich thus: 'all covetous for itself,' or 'careful,' 'curious,' 'gluttonous,' any of which words would fit the metre, and suit the sense of the passage.

out this comedy require a more careful revision than has yet been given; since if the crudest work of a man of genius is not to be rejected from the list of his writings in which it has once found place, it claims at least so much of editorial care as may leave it in a reasonably legible form.

It appears that in the same year which gave to the press this loose and slipshod effort at a comedy, the most perfect of Chapman's plays, though not published till six years later, was completed for the stage. The admirable comedy of *All Fools* is the first work which bears full evidence of the vigorous and masculine versatility, the force and freshness of his free and natural genius. The dedication, which seems to have been cancelled almost as soon as issued, gives one of the most singular proofs on record of a poet's proverbial inability to discern between his worse and better work. The writer who ten years before was so loud in his complaint of men's neglect, and so haughty in his claim on their attention for his crudest and faultiest work, now assures the friend to whom he inscribes a poem of real excellence,

"I am most loth to pass your sight
With any such-like mark of vanity,
Being marked with age for aims of greater weight
And drowned in dark death-ushering melancholy ;"

but for fear of piratical publishers who might print 'by stealth' an unauthorized and interpolated edition, 'without my passport, patched with other's wit,' he consents to 'expose to every common eye' what he calls

"The least allowed birth of my shaken brain,"

alleging as his excuse that 'of two enforced ills I elect the least;' and with this most superfluous apology he ushers in one of the most faultless examples of high comedy to be found in the whole rich field of our Elizabethan drama. The style is limpid and luminous as running water, the verse pure, simple, smooth and strong, the dialogue always bright, fluent, lively, and at times relieved with delicate touches of high moral and intellectual beauty; the plot and the characters excellently fitted to each other, with just enough intricacy and fullness of incident to sustain without relaxation or confusion the ready interest of readers or spectators.

The play and counterplay of action by which all the chief persons of the comedy trick and are tricked by each other in turn might easily have become perplexed or excessive in less careful and skilful hands; but the lightness and dexterity of handling which the poet has here for once manifested throughout the whole development of his dramatic scheme suffice to keep the course of the story clear and the attention of the reader alert without involution or fatigue; and over all the dialogue and action there plays a fresh and radiant air of mirth and light swift buoyancy of life which breathes rather of joyous strength and high-spirited health than of the fumes of 'dark death-ushering melancholy;' and as in matter of fact death was not ushered by melancholy or any other evil spirit into the stout presence of the old poet till full thirty-five years after the appearance and twenty-nine years after the dedication of this play, we may hopefully set down this malcontent phrase to some untimely fit of spleen from which, having thus given it vent, he soon shook himself clear and struck his pen through the record of it.

I find but one slight and characteristic blemish worth noting in a comedy in which the proudest among his great compeers might have permissibly taken fresh pride: it is that the final scene of discovery which winds up the main thread and reconciles the chief agents of the intrigue is somewhat hurriedly despatched, with too rapid a change of character and readjustment of relations, to make room for a thin-spun and wiredrawn sample of that tedious burlesque declamation with which the author was too prone to indulge a taste not likely to be shared or relished by his readers for the minute dissection of a dead jest, so dry that it crumbles into dust under the scalpel of the anatomist. All the rest of the comedy is so light, bright, and easy in all its paces that we are the less disposed to tolerate the stiffness and elaboration of this oratorical interlude. But this is really the only spot or patch I can discover on the jocund face of a delightful comic poem.

It is not impossible that the merit of pure and lucid style which distinguishes the best comedies of Chapman from the bulk of his other writings may

in part be owing to the slighter value set by the author on the workmanship of these. By temperament and inclination he was rather an epic or tragic than a comic poet: and in writing verse of a tragic or epic quality he evidently felt it incumbent on him to assert the dignity of his office, to inflate and exalt his style with all helps of metaphor and hyperbole, to stiffen the march of his metre and harden the structure of his language; and hence he is but too prone to rely at need on false props of adventitious and barbaric dignity, to strut on stilts or to swim on bladders: whereas in writing for the comic stage he was content to forget, or at least to forego, this imaginary dignity and duty; he felt himself no longer bound to talk big or to stalk stiffly, and in consequence was not too high-minded to move easily and speak gracefully. It is clear that he set no great store by his comic talent as compared with the other gifts of his genius; of all his comedies two only, *All Fools* and *The Widow's Tears*, have dedications prefixed to them, and in both cases the tone of the dedication is almost apologetic in its slighting reference to the slight worth of the work presented; a

tone by no means to be ascribed in this case to a general and genuine humility, since the dedications prefixed to his various poems, and to two among his tragedies published under his own eye, are remarkable for their lofty and dignified self-assertion. The fact that of these two tragedies, one, *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, was apparently unsuccessful on the stage, and the other, *Cæsar and Pompey*, seems never to have obtained a chance of appearing on the boards at all, may naturally have moved the author to assert their right to respect and acceptance with more studied emphasis than usual; in the earlier instance at least he is emphatic enough in his appeal from the verdict of the 'maligners' with whom he complains that it met 'in the scenical representation,' to the 'approbation of more worthy judgments' which 'even therein' it did not fail to obtain; and in the second case, though he appears to apologize for the lack of 'novelty and fashion' in a play 'written so long since' that it 'had not the timely ripeness of that age' (seventy-two) 'that, I thank God, I yet find no fault withal for any such defects,' yet he is apparently and reasonably confi-

dent that the offering of his 'martial history' is one honourable alike to poet and to patron. Both plays are rich in rhetorical passages of noble eloquence; but in all points of workmanlike construction and dramatic harmony they are incomparably inferior to the better sort of his comedies.

The year of the publication of *All Fools* was memorable to Chapman for a more hazardous misadventure on a more serious stage than the failure of a comedy on the boards, for which he had to thank the merited success of a play whose strange fortune it was to prove as tragical in its sequence as merry in itself, thus combining in a new fashion the two main qualities of Bottom's immortal interlude. All readers will remember the base offence taken and the base revenge threatened by the son of Darnley or of Rizzio for a passing jest aimed at those among his countrymen who had anticipated Dr. Johnson's discovery of the finest prospect ever seen by a native of Scotland; none can forget the gallantry with which Ben Jonson, a Scot by descent of whom it might have been said as truly as of the greatest in the generation before him that he

'never feared the face of man,' approved himself the like-minded son of a Roman-spirited mother by coming forward to share the certainty of imprisonment and the probability of mutilation with the two comrades who without his knowledge had inserted such perilous matter into their common work; and many will wish with me that he had never borne a nearer and less honourable relation to a king who combined with the northern virulence and pedantry which he may have derived from his tutor Buchanan a savour of the worst qualities of the worst Italians of the worst period of Italian decadence. It was worthier of the great spirit and the masterful genius of Jonson to be the subject of his tyranny than the laureate of his court. Far more fitly, had such an one then been born, would that office have been filled by any scribbling Scot of the excremental school of letters who might have sought and found in his natural prince a congenial patron with whom to bathe his sympathetic spirit in the pure morality, while swimming with somewhat short strokes in "the deep delicious stream of the Latinity," of Petronius Arbiter. Such a Cris-

pinulus or Crispinaccio would have found his proper element in an atmosphere whose fumes should never have been inhaled by the haughty and high-souled author of *The Poetaster;* and from behind his master's chair, with no need to seek for fear if not for shame the dastardly and lying shelter of a pseudonym which might at a pinch have been abjured, and the responsibility for its use shifted from his own shoulders to those of a well-meaning and invisible friend, the laurelled lackey of King James might as securely have launched his libels against the highest heads of poets to whom in that age all eyes looked up which would have looked down on him, as ever did the illustrious Latinist Buchanan against the mother of the worthy patron whose countenance would probably have sufficed to protect the meanest and obscurest creature of his common and unclean favour against all recrimination on the part of Shakespeare or of Jonson, of Beaumont or of Webster, of Fletcher or of Chapman.

The comedy thus celebrated for the peril it brought upon the ears and noses of its authors has of itself merit enough to have won for writers of less previous

note a sufficient share of more enviable celebrity. It is one of the most spirited and brilliant plays belonging to that class of which the two most famous examples are the *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Every Man in His Humour;* and for life and movement, interest and gaiety, it may challenge a comparison even with these. All the actors in *Eastward Ho,* down to the very slightest, such as the drawer, the butcher's man, and the keeper of the prison, have some quality and character of their own which gives them a place in the comic action; and in no play of the time do we get such a true taste of the old city life so often turned to mere ridicule and caricature by playwrights of less good humour, or feel about us such a familiar air of ancient London as blows through every scene; the homely household of the rich tradesman, the shop with its stall in front, the usurer's lodging, the waterside tavern, the Thames wharfs, stand out as sharply as if etched by the pen of Dickens or the needle of Whistler. The London of Hogarth, as set before us in that immortal series of engravings for which he is said to have taken the hint from this

comedy, does not seem nearer or more actual than this elder London of Jonson, Chapman, and Marston; and the more high-flying genius of Frank Quicksilver is as real and lifelike as the humbler debauchery and darker doom of Tom Idle. The parts of Mistress Touchstone and Gertrude are worthy of Molière in his homelier mood; and but for one or two momentary indecencies dropped here and there to attest the passage of Marston, the scenes in which they figure would be as perfect and blameless examples of pure broad comedy as any stage can show. The fluttering and exuberant ambition of the would-be Célimène or Millamant of the city is painted with such delightful force and freshness, her imperial volubility of contempt, the joyous and tremulous eagerness with which she obeys the precept of the Psalmist to 'forget her own people and her father's house,' her alternate phases of gracious patronage and overflowing obloquy, are so charming in the buoyancy and fertility of their changes that we are rejoiced when after the term of adversity so differently put to use by the prodigal daughter and the profligate apprentice Frank and

Gertrude are alike restored to the favour of the excellent old citizen by the kind offices of his worthy son-in-law. Not only have the poets given proof of gentler morality and a juster sense of justice than the great painter who followed long after in the track of their invention, but they have contrived even to secure our cordial regard for the kindly virtues of the respectable and industrious characters whose aim it is to rise by thrift and honesty; and we salute the promotion of 'Master Deputy's worship' to the proud office of substitute for the alderman of his ward with a satisfaction which no man surely ever felt in the exaltation of Hogarth's Lord Mayor to sit in judgment on his luckless fellow. The figures of Gertrude's gallant knight and his crew of Virginian adventurers, whose expedition finally culminates in a drunken shipwreck on the Thames, are as vivid and as pleasant as any of these other studies; and the scenes in which the jealous usurer is induced by the devices of Quicksilver and Sir Petronel to bring his disguised wife into the company of her paramour and reassure her supposed

scruples with his pithy arguments against conjugal fidelity, while he lets fly at her supposed husband the well-worn jests which recoil on his own head, have in them enough of wit and humorous invention to furnish forth the whole five acts of an ordinary comedy of intrigue. Even in these sketches from the prosaic life of their day the great and generous poets of that age were as prodigal of the riches of their genius as in the tragic and romantic work of their higher moods. The style of Chapman is perceptible in some of the best of these scenes in the third act as well as in the moral passage of metrical philosophy put into the lips of the half-drowned Quicksilver in the fourth, where only the last editor has taken note of his handiwork. Two allusions in the mouth of the usurer, one to 'the ship of famous Draco,' and one to the camel's horns of which we hear something too often from this poet, are in the unmistakable manner of Chapman. Other such points might perhaps be discovered; but on the whole we may probably feel safe in assigning to each of the three associates as

equal a share in the labour and the credit as they bore in the peril entailed on them by a comedy which, though disclaiming all unfriendly aim at rivalry with one of similar title already familiar to the stage, must probably and deservedly have eclipsed the success of two plays not published till two years later under cognate names by Decker and Webster; though the plot of *Northward Ho* is not wanting in humour and ingenuity, and in *Westward Ho* there is one scene of exquisite and incongruous beauty in which we recognize at once the tender and reckless hand which five years earlier had inserted into the yet more inappropriate framework of the *Satiromastix* as sweet an episode of seeming martyrdom and chastity secured under the shelter of a sleep like death.

In his next play Chapman reassumed the more poetical style of comedy which in *Eastward Ho* had been put off for the plainer garb of realism. *The Gentleman Usher* is distinguishable from all his other works by the serious grace and sweetness of the love-scenes, and the higher tone of feminine character and masculine regard which is sustained

throughout the graver passages. Elsewhere it should seem that Chapman had scorned to attempt or failed to achieve the task of rousing and retaining the chief interest of his reader in the fortune of two young lovers: but in this play he has drawn such a passionate and innocent couple with singular tenderness and delicacy. The broader effects of humour are comic enough, though perhaps somewhat too much prolonged and too often repeated; but the charm of the play lies in the bright and pure quality of its romantic part. The scene in which the prince and Margaret, debarred by tyranny and intrigue from the right of public marriage, espouse each other in secret by a pretty ceremony devised on the spot, and the dialogue of the wounded Strozza with the wife who has restored him to spiritual strength by 'the sweet food of her divine advice,' are models of the simple, luminous, and fervent style of poetry proper to romantic comedy at its highest. A noble passage in the fifth act of this play contains, as far as I know, the first direct protest against the principle of monarchy to be found in our poetical or dramatic literature; his last year's hazardous ex-

perience of royal susceptibilities may not improbably have given edge to the author's pen as it set down these venturous lines in a time when as yet no king had been taught, in the phrase of old Lord Auchinleck, that he had a joint in his neck.

> "And what's a prince? Had all been virtuous men,
> There never had been prince upon the earth,
> And so no subject: all men had been princes.
> A virtuous man is subject to no prince,
> But to his soul and honour; which are laws
> That carry fire and sword within themselves,
> Never corrupted, never out of rule;
> What is there in a prince, that his least lusts
> Are valued at the lives of other men,
> When common faults in him should prodigies be,
> And his gross dotage rather loathed than soothed?"

I should be surprised to find in any poet of Chapman's age an echo of such clear and daring words as these, which may suffice to shew that the oligarchic habit of mind to which I have before referred in him was the fruit of no sycophantic temper, no pliant and prostitute spirit, the property of a courtier or a courtezan, but sprung rather from pure intellectual haughtiness and a contempt for the mob of minds. Nevertheless it is well worth remark that such a deliberate utterance of republican prin-

ciple should then have been endured on the stage; that so loud a blast of direct challenge to the dominant superstition of the day should have been blown so near the court in the ears of a popular audience by a poet who, though at no time chargeable with any stain of venal or parasitic servility, was afterwards the habitual and grateful recipient of patronage from princes and favourites, and at all times, it must be confessed, in all his other works a strenuous and consistent supporter of the tradition of royalty against the conception of democracy.

The opening scene of *Monsieur d'Olive*, the next on the list of Chapman's comedies, is one of the most admirable in any play. More than once indeed the author has managed his overture, or what in the classic dialect of the old French stage was called the exposition, with a skill and animation giving promise of better things to come than he has provided; as though he had spent the utmost art his genius could command in securing the interest of his audience at the first start, and then left it for chance to support, letting his work float at will on the lazy waters of caprice or negligence. No more

impressive introduction to a play could have been devised than the arrival of the chief person, newly landed in high hopes and spirits from a long voyage, before the closed gates and curtained casements of an old friend's house, within which tapers are burning at noon, and before which the master walks sadly up and down, and repels his proffered embrace ; and the whole scene following which explains the trouble of one household and the mourning of another is a model of clear, natural, dignified dialogue, in which every word is harmonious, appropriate, and noble. The grace and interest of this exposition are more or less well sustained during the earlier part of the play ; but as the underplot opens out at greater length, the main interest is more and more thrust aside, cramped as it were for space and squeezed out of shape, till at last it is fairly hustled into a corner of the action to make way for the overwrought fooleries of the gull d'Olive and the courtiers who play upon his vanity ; and this underplot, diverting enough in a slight way for one or two scenes, is stretched out on the tenterhooks of farcical rhetoric and verbose dia-

logue till the reader finds himself defrauded of the higher interest which he was led to expect, and wearied of the empty substitute which the waywardness or indolence of the author has chosen to palm off on him in its stead. Towards the end indeed there is a profuse waste of good points and promising possibilities; the humorous ingenuity of the devices so well contrived to wind up together and in order the double thread of the main plot is stinted of room to work in and display its excellent quality of invention, and the final scene, which should have explained and reconciled all doubts and errors at large with no less force and fulness of careful dramatic capacity than was employed upon their exposition, is hastily patched up and slurred over to leave place for a last superfluous exhibition of such burlesque eloquence as had already been admitted to encumber the close of another comedy, more perfect than this in construction, but certainly not more interesting in conception. In spite however of this main blemish in the action, *Monsieur d'Olive* may properly be counted among the more notable and successful plays of Chapman.

Of his two remaining comedies I may as well say a word here as later. *Mayday*, which was printed five years after the two last we have examined, is full of the bustle and justle of intrigue which may be expected in such comedies of incident as depend rather on close and crowded action than on fine or forcible character for whatever they may merit of success. There is no touch in it of romance or poetical interest, but several of the situations and dialogues may have credit for some share of vigour and humour.

But of these qualities Chapman gave much fuller proof next year in the unchivalrous comedy of *The Widow's Tears*. This discourteous drama is as rich in comic force as it is poor in amiable sentiment. There is a brutal exuberant fun throughout the whole action which finds its complete expression and consummation in the brawny gallantry and muscular merriment of Tharsalio. A speculative commentator might throw out some conjecture to the effect that the poet at fifty-three may have been bent on revenge for a slight offered to some unseasonable courtship of his own by a lady less amen-

able to the proffer of future fame than the "belle marquise" who has the credit for all time to come of having lent a humble ear to the haughty suit and looked with a gracious eye on the grey hairs of the great Corneille. But whether this keen onslaught on the pretensions of the whole sex to continence or constancy were or were not instigated by any individual rancour, the comedy is written with no little power and constructed with no little ingenuity; the metrical scenes are pure and vigorous in style, and the difficulty of fitting such a story to the stage is surmounted with scarcely less of dexterity than of daring. The action of the last scene is again hampered by the intrusion of forced and misplaced humours; and while the superfluous underlings of the play are breaking and bandying their barren jests, the story is not so much wound up as huddled up in whispers and byplay; but it may certainly be pleaded in excuse of the poet that the reconciliation of the Ephesian matron to her husband was a somewhat difficult ceremony to exhibit at length and support with any plausible or effectual explanation.

Two other titles are usually found in the catalogue of Chapman's extant comedies; but it seems to me as difficult to discover any trace of Chapman in the comedy of *The Ball* as of Shirley in the tragedy of *Chabot*. These two plays were issued by the same printer in the same year for the same publishers, both bearing the names of Chapman and Shirley linked together in the bonds of a most incongruous union; but I know not if there be any further ground for belief in this singular association. The mere difference in age would make the rumour of a collaboration between the eldest of old English dramatists and the latest disciple of their school so improbable as to demand the corroboration of some trustworthier authority than a bookseller's title-page bearing date five years after the death of Chapman. In the very next year a play was published under the name of Fletcher, who had then been fifteen years dead; this play was afterwards reclaimed by Shirley as the work of his own hand, and of his alone; nor is there any doubt that Fletcher had not a finger in it. Of the authorship of *Chabot* there can be no

question; the subject, the style, the manner, the metre, the construction, the characters, all are perfectly Chapman's. *The Ball*, on the other hand, is as thoroughly in the lightest style of Shirley, and not a bad example of his airily conventional manner; it is lively and easy enough, but much below the mark of his best comedies, such as *The Lady of Pleasure* (where an allusion to this earlier play is brought into the dialogue), which but for a single ugly incongruity would be one of the few finest examples of pure high comedy in verse that our stage could show against that of Molière.

A foundling of yet more dubious parentage has been fathered upon Chapman by the tradition which has affixed to his name the putative paternity of "a comical moral censuring the follies of this age," anonymously published in his sixty-first year. It has been plausibly suggested that the title of this wonderful medley, *Two Wise Men and all the rest Fools*, was the first and last cause of its attribution to the hand of Chapman, and that the error arose from a confusion of this with the title of *All Fools*, the best of Chapman's comedies. In any

case it is difficult to believe that this voluminous pamphlet in the form of dialogue on social questions can have been the work of any practised or professional dramatist. It is externally divided into seven acts, and might as reasonably have been divided into twenty-one. A careful and laborious perusal of the bulky tract from prologue to epilogue, which has enabled me in some measure to appreciate the double scientific experiment of Mr. Browning on "Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis," emboldens me also to affirm that it has no vestige of dramatic action, no trace of a story, no phantom of a plot; that the reader who can believe the assertion of its title-page that it was "divers times" or indeed ever "acted" on any mortal stage by any human company before any living audience will have a better claim to be saved by his faith than the author by this sample at least of his works; that it contains much curious and sometimes amusing detail on social matters of the day, and is not wanting in broad glimpses or intervals of somewhat clownish humour. In the strong coarse satire on female Puritanism

those who will may discern touches which recall the tone if not the handiwork of the author of *An Humorous Day's Mirth*. The fact that several names occurring in the course of the dialogue, though not in the long list of marvellously labelled interlocutors, are anagrams of the simplest kind, being merely common English names spelt backwards, may be thought to indicate some personal aim in this elaborate onslaught on usurers, money-lenders, brokers, and other such cattle; and if so we have certainly no right to lay an anonymous attack of the kind, even upon such as these, to the charge of a poet who so far as we know never published a line in his long life that he feared to subscribe with his own loyal and honourable name. Such an one is not lightly to be suspected of the least approach in form or substance to the dirty tactics of a verminous pseudonymuncule, who at the risk of being ultimately shamed into avowal or scared into denial of his ignominious individuality may prefer for one rascally moment the chance of infamy as a slanderer to the certitude of obscurity as a scribbler.

Although, however, we may be inclined to allow no great weight to the tradition current fifty-seven years after the death of Chapman, which according to Langbaine was at that date the only authority that led him to believe in the general vague ascription of this work to the poet under whose name it has ever since found a questionable place in the corners of catalogues at the tail of his authentic comedies, the very fact of this early attribution gives it a certain external interest of antiquarian curiosity, besides that which it may fairly claim as a quaint example of controversial dialectics on the conservative side. The dialogues are not remarkable either for Platonic skill or for Platonic urbanity; for which reason they may probably be accepted with the more confidence as fairly expressive of the average of opinion than afloat among honest English citizens of the middle class, jealous of change, suspicious of innovation, indignant at the sight of rascality which they were slow to detect, much given to growl and wail over the decay of good old times and the collapse of good old landmarks, the degeneracy of modern manners, and the general in-

tolerability of things in an age of hitherto unknown perversity; men of heavy-headed patience and heavy-witted humour, but by no means the kind of cattle that it would be safe for any driver to goad or load overmuch. The writer may be taken as an exponent of Anglican conservatism if not of Catholic reaction in matters of religious doctrine and discipline; he throws his whole strength as a dialectician (which is not Herculean, or quite equal to his evident goodwill) into the discussion of a proposal to secularize the festivals and suppress the holidays appointed by the Church; and the ground of his defence is not popular but clerical; these holidays are to be observed not for the labourer's but for the saint's sake; and above all because our wiser forefathers have so willed it, for reasons which we are in duty bound to take on trust as indisputably more valid than any reasoning of our own. He has a hearty distrust of lawyers and merchants, and a cordial distaste for soldiers and courtiers; his sentiments towards a Puritan are those of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, his opinion of an agitator is worthy of

a bishop, and his view of a demagogue would do honour to a duke.

A very different work from the effusion of this worthy pamphleteer bears likewise, or at least has once borne, the dubious name of Chapman. This is a tragic or romantic drama without a title of its own, labelled it should seem for the sake of convenience by the licenser of plays as a "Second Maiden's Tragedy." It was first printed in 1824, with a brief note of introduction, from which we learn that the manuscript was originally inscribed with the name of William Goughe; that Thomas was then substituted for William, while a third Goughe, Robert, seems to have figured as one of the principal actors; that a second correction struck out either Goughe at one sweep of the pen, and supplanted both names by that of George Chapman; and that last of all this also was erased to make way for no less a claimant than William Shakespeare. To this late and impudent attempt at imposture no manner of notice need be accorded; but the claim preferred for Chapman deserves some attention from all students of our dramatic poetry.

In style and metre this play, which bears the date of his fifty-third year (1611), is noticeably different from all his acknowledged tragedies, one only excepted; but it is not more different from the rest than this one, which, though not published till twenty years after the death of Chapman, has never yet been called in question as a dubious or spurious pretender to the credit of his authorship. And if, as I am unwilling to disbelieve, Chapman was actually the author of *Revenge for Honour*, one serious obstacle is cleared out of the way of our belief in the justice of the claim advanced for him to this play also. Not that the two can be said to show many or grave points of likeness to each other; but between all other tragedies assigned to Chapman such points of intimate resemblance do undoubtedly appear, while the points of unlikeness between any one of these and either of the plays in question are at once as many and as grave.

Of the posthumous tragedy I purpose to say a word in its turn; meantime we may observe that it is not easy to conjecture any motive of interest which might have induced a forger of names to attri-

bute an illegitimate issue of this kind to Chapman rather than to another. His name was probably never one of those whose popularity would have sufficed to float the doubtful venture of a spurious play. To Shakespeare or to Fletcher it was of course a profitable speculation for knavish booksellers to assign the credit or discredit of any dramatic bantling which they might think it but barely possible to leave undetected at the door of such a foster-father, or to pass off for a time on the thickest-witted of his admirers as a sinful slip of the great man's grafting in his idler hours of human infirmity. But if there was in effect no plea for the intrusion of such a changeling into the poetic household of Chapman, whose quiver was surely full enough without the insertion of a stranger's shaft, the gratuitous selection of this poet as sponsor for this play appears to me simply unaccountable. No plausible reason can as far as I see be assigned for the superscription of Chapman's name in place of the cancelled name of Goughe, unless the writer did actually believe that the genuine work of George Chapman had been wrongly ascribed to Thomas or

William Goughe; whereas no reader of the play will imagine it possible that the name of Shakespeare can have been substituted in good faith and singleness of heart by a corrector honestly desirous of repairing a supposed error. Again, if the doubtless somewhat fragile claim of Chapman be definitely rejected, we find hitherto no other put forward to take its place. The author of *Death's Jest-book*, in that brilliant correspondence on poetical questions which to me gives a higher view of his fine and vigorous intelligence than any other section of his literary remains, reasonably refuses to admit a suggestion that the authorship of this nameless and fatherless poem might be ascribed to Massinger. 'The poisoning and painting is like him, but also like Cyril Tourneur; and it is too poetical for old Philip.' He might have added that it is also far too loose and feeble in construction for the admirable artist of whom Coleridge so justly remarked that his plays have the interest of novels; but Beddoes, whose noble instinct for poetry could never carry him in practice beyond the production of a few lofty and massive fragments of half-formed verse which

stand better by themselves when detached from the incoherent and disorderly context, was apparently as incapable of doing justice to the art of Massinger as of reducing under any law of harmony to any fitness of form his own chaotic and abortive conceptions of a plot; for the most faithful admirer of that genius which is discernible beyond mistake in certain majestic passages of his blank verse must admit that his idea of a play never passed beyond the embryonic stage of such an organism as that upon which he conferred the gift of lyric utterance in his best and favourite song, and that his hapless dramatic offspring was never and could never have been more than 'a bodiless childful of life in the gloom, Crying with frog voice, What shall I be?' Perhaps too for him the taint of Gifford's patronage was still on Massinger, and the good offices of that rancorous pedant may have inclined him to undervalue the worth of a poet announced and accompanied by the proclamation of such a herald. This connexion, fortunate as in one way it was for the dramatist to whose works it secured for ever a good and trustworthy text admirably edited and

arranged, was unfortunate in its influence on the minds of men who less unnaturally than unjustly were led to regard the poet also with something of the distaste so justly and generally incurred by his editor. This prepossession evidently inflamed and discoloured the opinions of the good Leigh Hunt, who probably would under no conditions have been able adequately to estimate the masculine and unfanciful genius of such writers as Ben Jonson, Massinger, and Ford; and a like influence may not impossibly have disturbed the far surer judgment and affected the far finer taste of a student so immeasurably superior to either Hunt or Beddoes in the higher and rarer faculties of critical genius as Charles Lamb. To Massinger at least, though assuredly not to Ford (who had not yet been edited by Gifford when Lamb put forth his priceless and incomparable book of "Specimens"), the most exquisite as well as the most generous of great critics was usually somewhat less than liberal, if not somewhat less than just.

But what is most notable to me in the judgment above cited from the correspondence of Beddoes is

that he should have touched on the incidental point of action which this anonymous play has in common with *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Duke of Milan*, and should also have remarked on the poetical or fanciful quality which does undoubtedly distinguish its language from the comparatively unimaginative diction of Massinger, without taking further account of the general and radical dissimilarity of workmanship which leaves the style of this poem equidistant from the three several styles of the sober Philip, the thoughtful George, and the fiery Cyril. It is singular that the name of a fourth poet, the quality of whose peculiar style is throughout perceptible, should have been missed by so acute and well-read a student of our dramatic poetry. The style is certainly and equally unlike that of Chapman, Massinger, or Tourneur; but it is very like the style of Middleton. The combination of the plots is as pitifully incongruous and formless, the movement of the metre as naturally sweet and fluent, the pathos of the situations as occasionally vivid and impressive, the play of the fancy as generally delicate and

unaffected, as in the best or the worst works of the fitful and powerful hand which gave us *The Changeling* and *The Witch*, *The Spanish Gipsy* and *Women beware Women*. Were there but one grain of external evidence, though light as that which now inclines the scale of probabilities in favour of Chapman, I should not hesitate in assigning to it the workmanship of this poem also; but as even such a grain of proof or of likelihood as this is wanting, we may remark one or two points in which a resemblance may be traced to the undoubted handiwork of Chapman; such as a certain grotesque abruptness and violence in some of the incidents; for example, the discharge of a pistol at the father of the heroine from the hand of her lover, by which that 'ancient sinner' is 'but mocked with death;' a semi-burlesque interlude in a scene of tragic interest and prelude to a speech of vivid eloquence, which may recall the sudden and random introduction of deeds of violence into the action in some of Chapman's plays, as for instance the two attempts at murder in *The Gentleman Usher*, where, though the plot is neither ill devised nor ill arranged, yet some excesses and

singularities in the leading incidents are at once perceptible and pardonable; and again, the manner of the ghost's reappearance at the close, where a disembodied spirit takes part in the stage business with all the coolness and deliberation of a living actor, and is apparently received among the company with little more sign of disturbance or surprise than if she were not confronted with her own dead body, can only be paralleled in Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois* or the *Death's Jest-book* of Beddoes, in each of which a leading part is filled throughout the later scenes by a ghost who takes his full share of the action and the dialogue, and may be said to make himself generally and creditably useful, without exciting the slightest remark or perturbation among his fleshly fellows of the scene. The quaint materialism of these realistic and too solid spectres, who show no sign and no desire of dissolution by melting into air or evaporating into dew, has in it nothing of the fine imagination which raises the supernatural agencies employed by the author of *The Witch* into a middle region of malign and monstrous life as far above the common ground of

mere prosaic phantoms as below the dark aërial height at which Shakespeare has clothed the forms with clouds and winged with winds the feet of the weird sisters. Nevertheless, both in *Bussy d'Ambois* and in this 'second Maiden's Tragedy' (as the Master of the Revels has somewhat inaptly labelled it), the first introduction of ghostly agency is impressive: and the scene in this latter where the sleep of the dead is first disturbed and her tomb violated by the passion of the baffled tyrant is well worthy of the praise it has received for the choice simplicity and earnest sweetness of style which yet hardly distinguish it above many other scenes and passages in this beautiful and singular poem, the story of whose fate has proved as strange and as fantastic as the incidents of its plot.

The first of Chapman's historic tragedies was published at the age of forty-eight, and stands now sixth on the list of the plays in which he had the help of no partner. He never wrote better and he seldom wrote worse than in this only play of his writing which kept any firm and durable hold on the stage. The impression made on Dryden by its

'glaring colours' in the representation, and the indignant reaction of his judgment 'in the reading,' are probably known to more than have studied the work by the light of their own taste. All his vituperation is well deserved by such excerpts as those which alone Sir Walter Scott was careful to select in his editorial note on this passage by way of illustration; not even the sharpest terms in the terrible and splendid arsenal of Dryden's satire can be too vivid or too vigorous in their condemnation of the damnable jargon in which the elder poet was prone to indulge his infirmity; whole sections of his poems and whole scenes of his plays are indeed but shapeless masses of bombast and bulky vacuity, with nothing better in them than most villainous 'incorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense; or at best a scantling of wit, which lies gasping for life and groaning beneath a heap of rubbish.' The injustice of the criticism lies only in the assertion or implication that there was nothing discoverable on all Chapman's ground but such cinder-heaps and windbags; whereas the proportion of

good to bad in this very play of *Bussy d'Ambois* is enough to outweigh even such demerits as it doubtless shares with too much of its author's work. There is a bright and fiery energy throughout, a vigour of ambitious aspiration, which is transmitted as it were by echo and reflection from the spirit of the poet into the spirit of his hero. The brilliant swordsman of the court of Henri III., who flashes out on us as the joyous central figure of one of the most joyous and vigorous in all the bright list of those large historic groups to which the strong swift hand of Dumas gave colour and life, has undergone at the heavier hand of the old English poet a singular transfiguration. He is still the irresistible duellist and amorist of tradition; but, instead of the grace and courtliness proper to his age and rank, Chapman has bestowed on him the grave qualities of an epic braggart, whose tongue is at least as long as his sword, and whose gasconades have in them less of the Gascon than of our 'Homer-Lucan' himself; who with all his notable interest in the France of his time and her turbulent history had assuredly nothing of the lighter and more gracious charac-

teristics of French genius. But in the broad full outline of this figure, and in the robust handling of the tragic action which serves for environment or for background to its haughty and dilated proportions, there is more proof of greatness than Chapman had yet given. His comic or gnomic poetry may be better or at least less faulty in its kind, but in that kind there is less room for the growth and display of those greater qualities which not unfrequently struggle through the hot and turbid atmosphere of his tragic writing, and show by a stormy and cloudy illumination the higher reaches of his real genius. Nor is there in these rugged outlying highlands of tragedy, and in the somewhat thick and troubled air of the brooding skies above them, no beauty perceptible but the beauty of cloud and flame, of flood and fell: they have intervals of pure sunshine and soft greensward, interludes of grave and tender harmony, aspects of deep and serene attraction. There is a noticeable abruptness and want of ease in the disposal of the incidents, as though the workman were not yet well broken in to his business; and in effect Chapman never did learn to run

with perfect ease and grace in tragic harness. Yet if his tragedies were erased from the roll of his works, and only the most perfect of his comedies and the better portions of his other poems were left for our judgment, the sentence that we should then have to pass would assuredly assign him a much lower place among English poets than he now may rightly claim to hold. A greater and a faultier genius finds expression in these tragic poems than in the more general and equable excellence of even his best comic or romantic plays.

The first in order of these, especially at first sight, is beyond question the most effective in point of dramatic interest. With all its tumid and turbid exuberance of speech, the action of this play never actually halts or flags. There is no depth or delicacy of character discernible in any of the leading parts; in some cases indeed it is hard at first to determine whether the author meant to excite the sympathies or the antipathies of his audience for a good or for a bad character; the virtue of the heroine collapses without a touch, and friends and foes change sides with no more reason shown than that the figure of

the dance requires it. But the power of hand is gigantic which shifts and shuffles these puppets about the board; there are passages of a sublime and Titanic beauty, rebellious and excessive in style as in sentiment, but full of majestic and massive harmony. The magnificent speech of the hero, stricken to death and leaning on his sword to die, has been often quoted, and as a sample of fiery imagination clothed in verse of solemn and sonorous music it can never be overpraised; the inevitable afterthought that the privilege of tragic poetry to exceed the range of realism is here strained to the utmost and beyond it will recur on reading many of the most memorable passages in these plays, where the epic declamation of the speaker breaks the last limit of law to attain the last limit of license possible to a style which even in outward form keeps up any pretence of dramatic plausibility. Any child may see and object that no man ever died with such a funeral oration on his lips; but any critic qualified to judge of such a poet in his strength and his weakness will temper the reflection with admiration of "that full and heightened style" which

the third among English tragic poets has applauded in the tragedies of Chapman. The height indeed is somewhat giddy, and the fullness too often tends or threatens to dilate into tumidity; sometimes the foot slips and the style stumbles heavily from its height, while for its fulness we find but the emptiness of a burst bladder; but while the writer's head remains clear and his hand sure, the high air of this poetry is fresh and buoyant, and its full cadences have in them a large echo as of mountain winds and waters. And if Webster, with the generous justice proper to a great fellow-craftsman in the highest guild of art, was able to condone the manifest abuse in Chapman's work of rhetoric and mere poetry, those may well be content to do likewise who bear duly in mind the admirable absence of any such defect from the vivid and intense veracity of his own.

If the union of active interest with superb declamation may suffice to explain the prolonged good fortune of Chapman's first tragedy on the boards, we can discover no such pretext to account for the apparent favour shown to his next venture in the

same field. It has no passage comparable for force and vehemence of imagination to the highest moods of the author of *Bussy d'Ambois;* to the second evocation of the spirit in a speech of which Lamb said well that it was 'tremendous, even to the curdling of the blood; I know nothing in poetry like it;' nor to the dying appeal of Bussy to his own surviving fame, or the sweet and weighty verses of invocation in which his mistress adjures 'all the peaceful regents of the night' to favour the first meeting of the lovers. It is disfigured by no such bloated bombast and animated by no such theatrical changes of effect, such sudden turns and sharp surprises, as fit the earlier play to catch the eyes and ears of an audience more impressible than critical. It has no such violent interlude of action and emotion as the scene in which Montsurry (Monsoreau) extorts by torture the confession of her guilt from the bleeding hand of his wife; an incident which singularly enough recalls a similar scene in the earliest play of the great French improvisatore who has told in such different fashion the story of the ambuscade by which Bussy fell under the weight

of treacherous numbers; though Dumas, in accordance I believe with all tradition, assigns to the duke of Guise the brutal act of force by which his wife was compelled to allure her lover into the snare set by her husband; whereas the English poet has not only altered the persons of the agent and patient, but has increased the means of compulsion from a pinch on the arm to the application of the rack to a body already mangled by such various wounds that the all but unparalleled tenacity of life in the victim, who reappears in the last scene not perceptibly the worse for these connubial endearments, is not the least notable in a series of wonders among which we scarcely make account of the singular part assigned to 'that affable familiar ghost' which moves so freely among the less incorporeal actors. To the tough nerves and vigorous appetite of the original audience this scene was no doubt one of the most acceptable in a closing act as remarkable for the stately passion of the style as for the high poetic interest of thought and action. Of these two qualities we find but one, and that the less dramatic, in the next work of the poet. No

poem, I suppose, was ever cast in dramatic form which appealed so wholly to the pure intellect. The singleness of purpose and the steadiness of resolution with which the poet has pursued his point and forborne all occasions to diverge from his path to it have made his work that which it is: a sculptured type and monument of his high and austere genius in the fulness of its faculties and the ripeness of its aims.

*The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron, Marshal of France,* a small epic in ten books or acts, is the noblest memorial we have of its author's original powers. Considered from the point of view it requires us to assume if we would do any justice to the mind which conceived and the hand which completed such a design, it is a wholly great and harmonious work of genius. Here for once not a note is out of tune, not a touch is out of keeping; the very inflation of the style is never the inflation of vacuity; its majesty is no longer tumid, and its elevation is no longer insecure. This at least has a right to be counted for ever among the classic works of English poetry. We close the book at last with

a full and satisfied sense of severe delight in the deep inner music which sounds on in the mind's ear after study of the thought and passion which inform it. The height and the harmony of this poem are equal forces in the composition of its excellence; the height of its conception and the harmony of its completion were alike needed to do justice to such lofty thought and such profound passion as it was called upon to handle and to sound. The strength and wealth of intelligence and of language from the opening of the first act to the close of the tenth show not a sign anywhere of possible exhaustion or inadequacy to the large demands made on them by the poet's high design. But that such a poem should ever have been 'acted in two plays at the Blackfriars and other public stages' must seem to us one of the strangest records in theatrical history. Its appearance on any boards for a single night would have been remarkable enough; but its reappearance at various theatres is all but incredible. The standard of culture and the level of intelligence required in its auditors surpass what we can conceive any theatrical audience to have attained in any modern age.

It is not merely that the hearer or spectator of such a poem in action would have to follow an unbroken line of high thought and lofty language without interlude or relief worth mentioning of lower or lighter material; he would have to forego all points of interest whatever but the satisfaction of the pure intelligence. There is endless repetition with absolutely no progress; infinite effusion of speech without one break of material incident. Even the subtle action and reaction of the mind, the ebb and flow of spiritual forces, the coming and going of intellectual influences, are not here given with the strength and cunning of such a master's hand as might secure and sustain the interest of a student in tracing their various movements by the light of his guidance; those movements are too deep and delicate for the large epic touch of Chapman to pursue with any certitude. A few strong broad strokes often repeated suffice to complete the simple and vigorous outline which is all he can give us of a character.

It has been observed that the portrait of the traitor marshal 'is overlaid with so many touches

that the outline is completely disguised;' but as none of these are incongruous, none mistimed or misplaced, we may reply that it is of the very essence of this character to express its passion with such effusion and exuberance of verbal energy that the very repetition and prolongation of these effects tend rather to heighten than to weaken the design, to intensify than to impair the impression of the weakness and the force of the mind that thus pours itself out and foams itself away in large and swelling words. The quality of pathos is not among the dominant notes of Chapman's genius; but there is pathos of a high and masculine order in the last appeals and struggles of the ruined spirit and the fallen pride which yet retain some trace and likeness of the hero and the patriot that has been, though these be now wellnigh erased and buried under the disgrace of deeds which have left nothing in his place but the ruins of a braggart and a traitor. Upon the two high figures of the marshal and the king Chapman has expended his utmost power; and they confront each other on his page in gigantic outline like two studies of a great sculptor whose

work is never at its best but when it assumes the heroic proportion of simple and colossal forms. There is no growth or development in either character; Chapman is always least happy when he tries his prentice hand at analysis; he only does well when as here he brings before us a figure at once full-grown, and takes no care but to enforce the first impression by constant deepening of the lines first drawn, not by addition of fresh light and shade, by softening or heightening of minor tones and effects.

The high poetic austerity of this work as it now stands is all the more striking from the absence of any female element; the queen appears in the fourth act of the second part as little more than a dumb figure; the whole interest is political, and the whole character is masculine, of the action and the passion on which the poet has fixed our attention and concentrated his own. A passage now cancelled in which the queen and Mademoiselle de Verneuil were brought forward, and the wife gave the mistress a box on the ear, had naturally drawn down a remonstrance from the French ambassador

who saw the domestic life of his master's court presented with such singular frankness of exposition to the contemporary eyes of London playgoers; and at his instigation the play was not unreasonably prohibited, by an act of censorship assuredly not so absurd or so arbitrary as in our own day has repeatedly exposed the direction of the English stage to the contempt and compassion of civilized Europe; which has seen at once the classical and the contemporary masterpieces of Italy and of France, and among them the works of the greatest tragic dramatist whom the world has seen since the death of Shakespeare, forbidden by the imperial mandate of some Lord Chamberlain or other Olympian person to corrupt the insular chastity of an audience too virtuous to face the contamination of such writers as Hugo or Alfieri; while the virtue thus tenderly guarded from the very sight of a Marion or a Mirra was by way of compensation—there is a law of compensation in all things—graciously permitted by leave of official examiners and under favour of a chaste Chamberlain to gloat upon the filthiest farces that could be raked from the sweepings of a stage

whose national masterpieces were excluded from our own. But it is only proper that the public virginity which averts her eyes from the successors of Euripides or of Shakespeare should open her bosom to the successors of Wycherley and Mrs. Behn.

In the time of Chapman the Master of the Revels wielded with as fitful a hand as imperious an authority as any court official of later date; yet then also there was so curious and scandalous an alternation of laxity with rigour in the direction of stage affairs that in the teeth of a direct prohibition the players, "when they saw that the whole court had left town, persisted in acting" the suppressed play with all the offending parts revived for the satisfaction of an audience of citizens, whose uncourtly suffrage was possibly attracted by this defiance of the court; and it may be conjectured that the savour of this political scandal gave zest and edge to their relish of the otherwise grave and sober entertainment set before them by the poet, whose somewhat weighty venture may thus have been floated into favour on the artificial tide of a chance which had made it the pretext of a popular cry. If however there was any such

anti-Gallican or seditious element in the success of a play which must certainly, one would say, have needed all the outward and casual help it could get to impose itself on the goodwill of the multitude, the French envoy was not slack in bringing a counter influence to bear against it; for three of the recalcitrant actors were arrested at his suit; but M. de Beaumont regretfully adds that "the principal person, the author, escaped." When three years later the poem was published, his printers had probably learnt caution enough from this fresh experience to ensure the suppression in all published copies of every trace of the forbidden part; and indeed there should seem to be two gaps in the printed text; one at the sudden end of the brief fourth act of the first part, which breaks off sharply after the eloquent and elaborate narrative of the speeches exchanged on the occasion of Biron's embassy to England between the marshal, Queen Elizabeth, and her prime minister; one at the end of the first or opening of the second act of the second part, which acts in both editions of the play are run into each other without any mark of division; but the great

length of the fifth (or tenth) act as it now stands may suggest that this seeming confusion has been caused by a mere numerical derangement or misprint.

The fittest symbol I can find for this great and central work of Chapman's genius would be one derived from itself; we might liken the poem to that "famous mountain" which was to be carved into the colossal likeness of the hero, a giant holding a city in his left hand and pouring from his right an endless flood into a raging sea. This device of a mad and magnificent vanity gives as it were a reflection of the great and singular qualities of the poem; it has an epic and Titanic enormity of imagination, the huge and naked solitude of a mountain rising from the sea, whose head is bare before the thunders, and whose sides are furrowed with stormy streams; and from all its rocks and torrents, crags and scaurs and gulleys, there seems to look forth the likeness afar off of a single face, superhuman and inordinate in the proportion of its prodigious features. The general effect is as that of some vast caprice of landscape; at once fantastic, exaggerated,

and natural. Around it we may group the remaining works of its author as lower spurs of the outlying range of mountains. None of these lesser poems were ever befriended by such an occasion as lifted for a season into perilous popularity the mightiest of their author's dramatic brood; that the two likest in form and spirit to this giant brother of their race appear to have won no popular favour at all is certainly less remarkable than the record of its own success.

*The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* is a singular example of Chapman's passion for paradox. It is a work of mature power and serious interest, richer in passages of moral magnificence and interludes of exalted meditation than any but that greatest of his poems which we have just been considering; from the large storehouse of these three plays a student may select at every step among their massive heaps of mental treasure fresh samples of rare thought and costly style, fresh ingots of weighty and glittering gold, fresh jewels of profound and living lustre. The third of these has less in common with the play of which it is the nominal

sequel than with the two of intervening date; it has indeed more of incident than they, but its value and interest mainly depend on its gnomic or contemplative passages. In the argument, the action, and the characters of this poem one chief aim of the author was apparently to reverse all expectations that might be excited by its title, and by way of counterpart to produce a figure in all points opposite to that of his former hero.

The brother and avenger of Bussy appears as the favourite and faithful follower of a leading accomplice in his murder; he is as sober, sententious, and slow in action as his brother was boastful, impetuous, and violent; he turns every chance of fortune and every change of place into an occasion for philosophic debate and moral declamation; the shelter provided by his patron and the ambuscade prepared by his enemies are to him equally opportune for the delivery of a lecture on ethics, as close and serried in its array of argument as it is grave and measured in its eloquence of exposition. Hamlet himself gave less cause of complaint to the "poor ghost" whose second resurrection was insuffi-

cient to impel him to the discharge of his office than this yet more deliberate and meditative avenger of blood: and it is not without cause that the tardy shade of Bussy rises to rebuke the tardier hand of his brother in words heavier and more bitter than any that fall from the majesty of buried Denmark. The quaint contrast between the tragic violence of the story and the calm interest of the dialogue is not the only aspect afforded by this poem of its author's taste for extravagance of paradox and shocks of moral surprise. His delight throughout these historic plays is to put into the mouths of his chief speakers some defence of the most preposterous and untenable proposition, some apology for the most enormous and unpopular crime, that his ingenuity can fix upon for explanation or excuse. Into the mouth of Biron he had already put a panegyric on the policy and the person of Philip II.; into the mouth of Clermont he puts a vindication of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. This latter curious and courageous abuse of intellectual dexterity may perhaps have contributed to the ill success of a play which in any case

must have disappointed, and that apparently by design and of malice prepense, the expectations appealed to by a title seemingly devised to trade upon the popularity of *Bussy d'Ambois*, and make its profit out of the artificial capital of a past success. The audience attracted by the promise implied in such a title may easily have been disinclined by such a disappointment to receive with toleration these freaks of dialectic ingenuity.

It is not likely that a writer who must have been old enough at the age of thirteen to feel and to remember the shock of the first tidings of the hideous twenty-fourth of August 1572—that an English poet and patriot of the stalwart type which from all that we know of Chapman we might expect to find always as nobly exemplified in his life and writings as in those of such elder and younger contemporaries as Spenser and Jonson—should have indulged any more personal sentiment in these eccentric trials of intellectual strength than a wayward pleasure in the exercise and exhibition of his powers of argument and eloquence; but there was certainly in his nature something of

the sophist as well as of the gnomic poet, of Thrasymachus as well as of Theognis. He seems to feel a gladiator's pleasure in the sword-play of a boisterous and high-handed sophistry, less designed to mislead or convince than to baffle or bear down his opponent. We can imagine him setting up almost any debateable theorem as a subject for dispute in the schools of rhetoric, and maintaining his most indefensible position with as much energy and cunning of argument as his native force of mind could bring to the support of his acquired skill of fence: we can perceive that in any such case he would argue his point and reinforce his reasoning with no less passion and profusion of thought and speech than if his heart and conscience had been enlisted on the side which in fact he had taken up by mere chance or defiant caprice.

This however is by no means the general character of the philosophy set forth and the eloquence displayed in this poem. The whole character of Clermont, conceived as it is in a spirit of direct defiance to all rules and traditions of dramatic effect, and elaborated as though in disdain of possible success

or the anticipated chance of popularity, shows once more the masterly workmanship of a potent and resolute hand. In almost every scene there are examples of sound and noble thought clothed in the sober colours of terse and masculine poetry; of deep and high meditation touched now and then with the ardour of a fervid spirit and the light of a subtle fancy. At every page some passage of severe beauty reminds us with how great a spirit we are called to commune, and stand in the presence of how proud and profound a mind.

His equal love for the depths and the heights of speculation may too often impel this poet to overstrain his powers of thought and utterance in the strong effort to dive or to soar into an atmosphere too thin or a sea too stormy to admit the facile and natural play of his vigorous faculties; but when these are displayed in their full strength and clearness, the study of them gives us some taste of the rare and haughty pleasure that their owner must have taken in their exercise. Here as elsewhere I had taken note in my mind of special verses and passages fit for extraction, which might give some

sample of the general power and charm of the keen intellect and the fine imagination that shape and inform the scheme and action of the poem; but to cite one or more instances of these would be to wrong the profuse and liberal genius which has sown them broadcast in so rich a soil. The reader who seeks them for himself with a judging eye and an apprehensive spirit will not be unlikely to make of *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, for the wealth and the weight of its treasures of ethical beauty, his chosen and peculiar favourite among the works of Chapman.

In the last of this stately line of tragic poems dealing with the recent or immediate history of France we find the same prevailing qualities of moral force and poetic dignity. The tragedy of *Chabot* is more equable and less ambitious in treatment than any of its compeers; but the model given in its hero of majestic faith and august integrity may be classed among the purest and most perfect studies that we have from the sculptor's hand. The serene and stainless figure of a wholly righteous and loyal man is so thoroughly and truth-

fully sustained by the high instinct and spiritual sense of the poet that we may trace and recognize from the first a nature so inflexible at once and so sensitive as to refuse all shelter or compromise which might rather protect than vindicate his innocence from the attacks of fraud and injustice, and when cleared of all their charges and restored to all his honours to lie down and die of the wound inflicted by the mere shame of suspicion: a heart so stout and so tender that it could resist all shocks and strokes of power or treachery, and bleed to death for grief to be distrusted where most of all it had deserved to find trust.

But here again the singleness and purity of the interest could hardly be expected to secure success on the stage; and though we have no hint as to the good or ill fortune of this high-toned poem, we may conjecture that it could hardly have been redeemed from popular indifference by the dramatic power and pathetic impression of the scene in which the wife and father-in-law of the arraigned admiral prevail by the justice and dignity of their appeal upon the pride and prepossession of the queen.

Yet this at least, and the last scene, in which Chabot dies at the feet of his repentant master, with a prayer for the pardon of his enemy on the lips that kiss for the last time the hand which must confer it, should have found favour with an audience capable of doing justice to the high desert of such austere and unseductive excellence.

As we have no external ground for conjecture by what original impulse or bias of mind the genius of Chapman was attracted to the study and representation on an English stage of subjects derived from the annals of contemporary France, or what freak of perverse and erratic instinct may have led him to bring before a Protestant audience the leading criminals of the Catholic party under any but an unfavourable aspect, so we have no means of guessing whether or not any conscious reason or principle induced him to present in much the same light three princes of such diverse characters as the first Francis and the third and fourth Henries of France. Indeed, but for a single reference to his ransom 'from Pavian thraldom' (Act ii. Scene iii.), we should be wholly at a loss to recognize in the royal

master of Chabot the radiant and exuberant lover of the whole world of women,

> "ce roi sacré chevalier par Bayard,
> Jeune homme auquel il faut des plaisirs de vieillard,"

who in our own age has been far otherwise presented on the theatre of a far mightier poet. There is no hint in the play that any more prevailing and less legitimate influence than a wife's was brought to bear in favour of Chabot on a king with whom his lawful consort might have been supposed of all women the least likely to prevail; and by this suppression or disguise of the personal interest actually exerted on behalf of his hero the dramatist has defrauded of her due credit the real friend of the fallen admiral; for it was not at the instance of the queen, but at the instance of Madame d'Etampes, a kinswoman of Chabot, that the chancellor Poyet was arrested and disgraced in the same year (1542) which had seen the fall, the restoration, and the death by heartbreak of the faithful minister who owed not to the intercession of the king's wife but to his own alliance by blood with the king's mis-

tress that revenge which at the first occasion given the duchess was not slow to exact from her lover on the triumphant enemy of her kinsman.

The haughty integrity which involved and upheld Chabot in danger and disgrace, and the susceptible pride which when restored to favour could no longer support him under the sense of past degradation, are painted from the life of history; but his poet may be thought to have somewhat softened the harsher features of that arrogance and roughness of temper which impaired the high qualities and imperilled the high station of the brave and upright admiral who dared his king to find a ground for his impeachment. And if we miss in Chapman's portrait those chivalrous and amorous features which long kept fresh in popular fancy the knightly fame of Francis I., the figure set before us is not wanting in a kingly grace and dignity which the dramatist has chosen to bestow with an equal hand on the grandson to whom neither history nor tradition has assigned even so much of 'the king-becoming graces' as may be allowed to the conqueror of Marignano. Chapman indeed has in this case taken so little care to

preserve the historic relations of his leading characters, that the king by whose intervention Bussy d'Ambois was betrayed to the jealousy of Monsoreau appears not as the treacherous enemy but as the trusty friend and patron of his brother's rebellious favourite; pardons and prefers him to the rank of his own, and adopts him into that station by the surname of his eagle; while instead of the king it is here the duke of Anjou who delivers his refractory minion into the murderous snare set for him by an injured husband. But if I read aright the hinted imputation of Brantôme, it would seem that some years before he put into the hands of Monsoreau the intercepted correspondence of Bussy with his wife the king had already laid an ambush of 'twelve good men' armed with pistols and 'mounted on Spanish horses taken from the stables of a very great personage who had set them on' to attempt the life of his brother's indomitable champion, who was preserved as well by his own presence of mind and discretion as by the good fortune which befell him to find the door

of a neighbour's house ajar for him to slip through and fasten it against pursuit. Being compelled after this adventure to leave Paris in consequence of his threats 'to slit folk's nostrils, and that he would kill everybody' in retaliation for this nocturnal assault, the gallant bravo was escorted out of the city by all the noble retainers of his ignoble patron the duke of Anjou, but by three gentlemen only of the king's household brigade; his kinsman Brantôme, whom he charged at parting to bear back his defiance to the whole court, M. de Neuville, and the hero Crillon, who in spite of his attachment to the king's party refused to forsake the friendship of so stout a swordsman.

Although the first standard edition of Brantôme's Lives was not published by a descendant of his family till thirty-two years after the death of Chapman, it is singular that the English poet who thought fit to choose as a subject for tragedy the fate of a man at the time of whose murder he had himself reached the age of twenty should also have thought fit so seriously to alter the facts of

his story for no discernible reason but a desire to shift the charge of the principal villainy from the shoulders of a king to those of his brother. In either play dedicated to the memory of Bussy—who at the wildest pitch of his windy and boisterous vanity can never have anticipated that twenty-eight years after his death he would figure on the page of a foreign poet as a hero of the Homeric or Lucanian type—the youngest son of Catherine de' Medici is drawn in colours as hateful as those of truth or tradition; whereas the last king of his line is handled with such remarkable forbearance that his most notorious qualities are even less recognizable than those of his grandfather in the delicate and dignified study of Chapman. A reader indeed, if such an one were possible, who should come to the perusal of these plays with no previous knowledge of French history, would find little difference or distinction between Henri de Valois and Henri de Bourbon; and would probably carry away the somewhat inaccurate impression that the slayer of the duke of Guise and the judge of the duke of Biron were men of similar tastes

and manners, respectable if not venerable for their private virtues, elegant and sententious in their habitual choice of language, grave and decorous in their habitual carriage and discourse, and equally imbued with a fine and severe sense of responsibility for the conscientious discharge of the highest and hardest duties of their royal office.

It is less remarkable, as the dramatist in his dedication to Sir Thomas Howard disclaims all pretension to observe "the authentical truth of either person or action," as a thing not to be expected "in a poem whose subject is not truth, but things like truth," that he should have provided to avenge the daring and turbulent desperado who outbraved the gorgeous minions of the king with a simple dress set off by the splendour of six pages in cloth of gold, and then signalized by a fresh insult under the very eyes of Henry his enforced reconciliation with the luckless leader of their crew, a brother of whose name I know nothing but that Georges de Clermont d'Amboise, not a follower of Guise but a leader of the Huguenots, was slain

seven years earlier than Bussy in the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Chapman's apology for the attribution of this name to the apparently imaginary avenger of his brother's blood is better worth remembering than such inquiries are worth pursuing. "Poor envious souls they are," says the poet, "that cavil at truth's want in these natural fictions;" a reasonable and memorable protest against the perverse or senseless paradox which confounds truth with fact, and refuses to distinguish veracity from reality; and which would not be worth the passing notice of a contemptuous instant, if men of genius would forbear to confuse the minds of their feebler and more servile admirers by the adoption and promulgation in the loudest tones of prophecy of such blatant and vacuous babble about "kinship of fiction to lying" and so forth as should properly be left to the lips of the dunces who may naturally believe it, being thick-witted enough to accept as serious reasoning and deliberate opinion the most wilful and preposterous paradoxes thundered forth from pulpit or from tripod in the most riotous and ludi-

crous paroxysms of wayward humour or fantastic passion.

That the "Roman tragedy" of *Cæsar and Pompey* was earlier in date than most though later in publication than any except *Chabot* of the French series, we might have conjectured without the evidence of the dedication. It is more unequal and irregular in the proportion of its good parts and its bad than any of Chapman's tragedies except *Bussy d'Ambois;* I should imagine it to be a work of nearly the same period; though, as was before intimated, it bears more affinity to the sequel of that play and to the great tragic poem on Biron in the main quality of interest and the preponderance of speech over action. To this play we might adapt a well-known critical remark of Dr. Johnson's on *Henry VIII.*, much less applicable in that case than in this, and say that the genius of the author comes in and goes out with Cato. Not that even in this case that rhetorical phrase would be wholly accurate; there are noble lines and passages discernible elsewhere; but the

glory of the poem is given it by the scenes in which Cato is the leading figure. I know nothing in moral or contemplative poetry more admirable than the speech in the first scene on fear or mistrust of the gods, and the soliloquy in the last act on sleep and death. The serene and sublime emotion of heroic wisdom is in either passage so touched and tempered with something of the personal ardour of a noble passion that its tone and effect are not merely abstract or didactic, but thoroughly dramatic and human; and the weighty words ring in the ear of our remembrance long after the mind has first unconsciously absorbed and retained the lofty sound and sense of the memorable and magnificent verse.

It is especially in such examples as these that we perceive the great quality of Chapman's genius, the true height and purity of its power; majestic intellect lighted and enkindled by poetic imagination, the high beauty of heroic thought warmed and winged with the spiritual fire of a living sentiment. It is true that those who read only the glorious excerpts given from this poem by Charles Lamb will

have a nobler impression of its merit than they who read the whole; but those only who read the whole will know all its merit as well as all its demerit; they will find fresh treasures of fine thought and high expression embedded among dense layers of crabbed and confused rhetoric, wedged in between rocky strata of thick and turgid verse. As there is little other life or movement in the play but that of declamation or discussion, we might presume that if it had ever "touched at the stage" its reception would in all likelihood have been something less than favourable; but we have already remarked on such inexplicable variations of good and ill luck in the fortunes of Chapman's plays that no conclusion of the kind can be assumed as certain. That it never did lose on any boards its long-preserved immunity from the touch of actors or managers, we may, I suppose, after the author's assurance of its virginity at the date of publication, be tolerably confident.

Twenty years after the death of Chapman the long list of his dramatic works was completed by the publication of two tragedies in which, though

there are but few qualities common to both, there are yet fewer traces of either the chief merits or the chief defects which distinguish and deform alike the poems and the tragic plays published during the life of the author. There is nothing in them of bombast, of barbarism, or of obscurity; there is assuredly no lack of incidents, and these, however crowded and violent in themselves, are conducted with such clearness and simplicity of exposition as to keep the attention and interest of the reader undistracted and unfatigued. The style in both is pure, lucid, and vigorous; equably sustained at an even height above the lowlands of prosaic realism and beneath the cloudland of winds and vapours; more forcible and direct in the first play, more florid and decorative in the second. On the other hand, these posthumous children have not the lofty stature, the kingly aspect, the gigantic sinews and the shining eyes, which went far to redeem the halting gait and the irregular features of their elders. They want the breadth of brow, the weight of brain, the fulness of speech and the fire of spirit, which make amends

for the harsh voice and stammering tongue that imperfectly deliver the message entrusted to them; the tumultuous eloquence which bears down and sweeps away all physical impediment of utterance, the fervid vitality which transfigures and atones for all clumsiness of gesture or deformity of limb. No thought so ripe and sweet, no emotion so exalted and august is here discernible as that which uplifts the contemplation and upholds the confidence of the highest in spirit and the deepest in thought among those earlier speakers who served as mouthpieces of the special genius of their high-minded and deep-souled creator. There is no trace of the ethical power which informs and moulds the meditation of Clermont or of Cato, no relic of the imaginative passion which expands and inflates the fancy of Bussy or of Biron.

In *Alphonsus* there is more of Chapman's quality at first perceptible than in *Revenge for Honour*; there is a certain hardness in the simplicity of tone, a certain rigidity in the sharp masculine lineaments of style and character, common to much of his work when free from the taint of crabbed or bombastic

obscurity. The singular violations and confusions of history, which may be taken to mask the probable allusions to matters of more recent political interest, are ably explained and illustrated by Dr. Elze in the thoroughly efficient and sufficient introduction to his edition of this play; in which the student will observe, with gratitude for his help and admiration for his learning in all matters of social and historical illustration, that the German editor has kept well to such work as he was perfectly competent to discharge, and has never on this occasion exchanged the highest seat in the hall of scholarship for the lowest form in the school of criticism. By him as by others the actual merit of this most unhistoric of historical dramas has perhaps been somewhat underrated. Naked as it is of ornament, violent in most of its action and repulsive in several of its scenes, barren of beauty in language and poor in treasure of thought, it never fails in animation and interest; and the hardened student of our early stage who has once entered the shambles will hardly turn away in disgust or weariness from the fume and flow of monotonous bloodshed till his curiosity

at least has been satisfied by the final evolution of the tangled web of slaughter. In this catastrophe especially there is a remarkable sense of strong material effect, with a notable capacity for vigorous theatrical manipulation of incident, which is as notably deficient in the earlier and loftier works of Chapman.

In the tragedy of *Revenge for Honour* I have already noticed the curious change of style which distinguishes it from all other works of Chapman: a change from rigidity to relaxation, from energy to fluency, from concentration to effusion of language. It has something of the manner and metre of Fletcher and his school, something of the softness and facility which lend a half effeminate grace to the best scenes of Shirley; while in the fifth act at least I observe something too much of the merely conventional imagery and the overflow of easy verbosity which are the besetting sins of that poet's style. Only in one image can I find anything of that quaint fondness for remote and eccentric illustration in which the verse of Chapman resembles the prose of Fuller: this is put into the mouth of

the villain of the piece, who repudiates conscience as

> "a weak and fond remembrance
> Which men should shun, as elephants clear springs,
> Lest they behold their own deformities
> And start at their grim shadows."

Even here the fall of the verse is not that of Chapman; and the tone of the verses which immediately follow is so utterly alien from the prevailing tone of his that the authenticity of the scene, as indeed of the whole play, can only be vindicated by a supposition that in his last years he may for once have taken the whim and had the power to change his style and turn his hand to the new fashion of the youngest writers then prospering on the stage. Only the silliest and shallowest of pedants and of sciolists can imagine that a question as to the date or the authorship of any poem can be determined by mere considerations of measure and mechanical computation of numbers; as though the language of a poem were divisible from the thought, or (to borrow a phrase from the Miltonic theology) the effluence were separable from the essence of a man's

genius. It should be superfluous and impertinent to explain that the expression is not to be considered apart from the substance; but while men who do not know this are suffered to utter as with the authority of a pedagogue or a pulpiteer the verdict of gerundgrinders and metremongers on the finest and most intricate questions of the subtlest and most sublime of arts, it is but too evident that the explanation of even so simple and radical a truth can be neither impertinent nor superfluous. It is not because a particular pronoun or conjunction is used in this play some fifty times oftener than in any other work of its author, a point on which I profess myself neither competent nor careful to pronounce, that I am prepared to decide on the question of its authenticity or its age. That question indeed I am diffident enough to regard as one impossible to resolve. That it is the work of Chapman I see no definite reason to disbelieve, and not a little reason to suppose that it may be. The selection and treatment of the subject recall the trick of his fancy and the habit of his hand; the process of the story is in parts quaint and bloody, galvanic and

abrupt; but the movement on the whole is certainly smoother, the evolution more regular, the arrangement more dramatic than of old. Accepting it as the last tragic effort of the author whose first extant attempt in that line was *Bussy d'Ambois*, we shall find perhaps in the general workmanship almost as much of likeness as of unlikeness. Considered apart and judged by its own merits, we shall certainly find it, like *Alphonsus*, animated and amusing, noticeable for a close and clear sequence of varying incident and interest, and for a quick light touch in the sketching of superficial character. These being its chief qualities, we may fairly pronounce that whether or not it be the work of Chapman it belongs less to his school than to the school of Shirley; yet being as it is altogether too robust and masculine for a work of the latter school, it seems most reasonable to admit it as the child of an older father, the last-born of a more vigorous generation, with less of strength and sap than its brothers, but with something in return of the younger and lighter graces of its fellows in age. The hero and his father are figures well invented and well sustained; the

villains are not distorted or overdrawn, and the action is full of change and vivacity.

Of the poems published by Chapman after the first of his plays was given to the press, we may say generally that they show some signs of advance and none of retrogression from the standard of his earlier work. Out of many lovely lines embedded in much thick and turbid matter I choose one couplet from *The Tears of Peace* as an example of their best beauties :

> "Free sufferance for the truth makes sorrow sing,
> And mourning far more sweet than banqueting."

In this poem, with much wearisome confusion and iteration of thought and imagery, reprobation and complaint, there are several noble interludes of gnomic and symbolic verse. The allegory is of course clouded and confounded by all manner of perversities and obscurities worth no man's while to elucidate or to rectify; the verse hoarse and stiff, the style dense and convulsive, inaccurate and violent; yet ever and anon the sense becomes clear, the style pure, the imagery luminous and tender, the

verse gracious and majestic; transformed for a moment and redeemed by great brief touches of high and profound harmony; of which better mood let us take in proof a single instance, and that the most sustained and exquisite we shall find:

Before her flew Affliction, girt in storms,
Gash'd all with gushing wounds, and all the forms
Of bane and misery frowning in her face;
Whom Tyranny and Injustice had in chase;
Grim Persecution, Poverty, and Shame;
Detraction, Envy, foul Mishap, and lame
Scruple of Conscience; Fear, Deceit, Despair;
Slander and Clamour, that rent all the air;
Hate, War, and Massacre; uncrownèd Toil;
And Sickness, t' all the rest the base and foil,
Crept after; and his deadly weight trod down
Wealth, Beauty, and the glory of a crown.
These ushered her far off; as figures given
To show, these crosses borne make peace with heaven.
But now, made free from them, next her before,
Peaceful and young, Herculean silence bore
His craggy club; which up aloft he hild;
With which and his fore-finger's charm he still'd
All sounds in air; and left so free mine ears,
That I might hear the music of the spheres,
And all the angels singing out of heaven;
Whose tunes were solemn, as to passion given;
For now, that Justice was the happiness there
For all the wrongs to Right inflicted here.

Such was the passion that Peace now put on ;
And on all went ; when suddenly was gone
All light of heaven before us : from a wood,
Whose sight, fore-seen, now lost, amazed we stood,
The sun still gracing us ; when now, the air
Inflamed with meteors, we discovered fair
The skipping goat ; the horse's flaming mane ;
Bearded and trainèd comets ; stars in wane ;
The burning sword ; the firebrand-flying snake ;
The lance ; the torch ; the licking fire ; the drake ;
And all else meteors that did ill abode ;
The thunder chid ; the lightning leapt abroad :
And yet when Peace came in all heaven was clear ;
And then did all the horrid wood appear,
Where mortal dangers more than leaves did grow ;
In which we could not one free step bestow,
For treading on some murder'd passenger
Who thither was by witchcraft forced to err ;
Whose face the bird hid that loves humans best,
That hath the bugle eyes and rosy breast,
And is the yellow autumn's nightingale."

This is Chapman at his best ; and few then can better him. The language hardly holds lovelier lines, of more perfect colour and more happy cadence, than some few of these which I have given to shew how this poet could speak when for a change he was content to empty his mouth of pebbles and clear his forehead of fog. The vision

of Homer which serves as overture to this poem is not the only other noble feature which relieves a landscape in too great part made up of rocks and brambles, of mire and morass; and for the sake of these hidden green places and sunny moments some yet may care to risk an hour or so of toil along the muddy and thorny lanes that run between.

From the opening verses of *The Tears of Peace* we get one of the few glimpses allowed us into the poet's personal life, his birthplace, the manner and the spirit of his work, and his hopes in his 'retired age' for 'heaven's blessing in a free and harmless life;' the passage has beauty as well as interest far beyond those too frequent utterances of querulous anger at the neglect and poverty to which he could not resign himself without resentment. It would have been well for himself as for us, who cannot now read such reiterated complaints without a sense of weariness and irritation, if he had really laid once for all to heart the noble verses in which he supposes himself to be admonished by the 'spirit Elysian' of his divine patron Homer, who told him, as he says, 'that he was angel to me, star, and fate.'

"Thou must not undervalue what thou hast,
In weighing it with that which more is graced;
The worth that weigheth inward should not long
For outward prices. This should make thee strong
In thy close value: Nought so good can be
As that which lasts good between God and thee.
Remember thine own verse—Should Heaven turn Hell
For deeds well done, I would do ever well."

The dignity and serenity of spirit here inculcated are not compatible with the tone of fierce remonstrance and repining defiance which alternates with such higher tones of meditation and self-reliance as constantly exalt and dignify the praises of those patrons to whom he appeals for recognition as for a right not to be withheld without discredit to them and danger of future loss of that glory which he had to give. In all dedicatory verse known to me I find nothing that resembles the high self-respect and haughty gratitude of a poet who never forgets that for every benefit of patronage conferred he gives fully as much as he may receive. Men usually hurry over the dedications of poet to patron with a keen angry sense of shame and sorrow, of pity and repulsion and regret; but it may be justly claimed for Chapman that his verses of dedi-

cation can give no reader such pain as those of others.

His first and best patron in the court of James was that youth on whose coffin so many crowns of mourning verse were showered, and who does by all report seem to have well deserved that other than official regrets should go with him to his grave. A boy dying at eighteen after three years' proof of interest in the higher culture of his time, three years during which he had shown himself, as far as we can see, sincere and ardent in his love of noble things only, and only of noble men, of poetry and of heroes—champion of Raleigh in his prison and patron of Chapman in his need—must certainly have been one worthy of notice in higher places than a court; one who, even if born in a loftier atmosphere and likelier to bring forth seed of enduring honour, would assuredly have earned remark and remembrance as a most exceptional figure, of truly rare and admirable promise.

The inscription of Chapman's Iliad to Prince Henry is one of his highest and purest examples of

moral verse: the august praise and grave exaltation of his own great art give dignity to the words of admonition as much as of appeal with which he commends it to the acceptance and reverence of kings. We may well believe that the prince's death gave to the high heart of his old Homeric teacher and counsellor of royal and heroic things a sharper pain than the mere sense of a patron lost and of personal as well as of national hopes cut off. Yet in his special case there was good reason for special regret. The latter instalments of his lofty labour on the translation of Homer were inscribed to the ignoblest among the minions, as the former had been inscribed to the noblest among the children of the king. An austere and stately moralist like Chapman could hardly have sought a stranger patron than Carr; and when we find him officiating as paranymph at those nuptials which recall the darkest and foulest history in all the annals of that reign, the poisonous and adulterous secrets of blood and shame in whose darkness nothing is discernible but the two masked and muffled figures of treachery

and murder, we cannot but remember and apply the parallel drawn by Macaulay from the court of Nero; nor can it be with simple surprise that we listen to the sermon or the song composed by Seneca or by Lucan for the epithalamium of Sporus and Locusta.

The celebration of that monstrous marriage in ethic and allegoric verse brought nothing to Chapman but disquiet and discredit. Neither Andromeda Lady Essex nor Perseus Earl of Somerset had reason to thank or to reward the solitary singer whose voice was raised to call down blessings on the bridal bed which gave such a Julia to the arms of such a Manlius. The enormous absurdity of Chapman's ever unfortunate allegory was on this auspicious occasion so much more than absurd that Carr himself would seem to have taken such offence as his luckless panegyrist had undoubtedly no suspicion that he might give. And yet this innocence of intention affords one of the oddest instances on record of the marvellous want of common sense and common tact which has sometimes been so notable in men of genius.

It is hardly credible that a grave poetic moralist of fifty-five should have written without afterthought this thrice unhappy poem of *Andromeda Liberata*. Its appearance did for once succeed in attracting attention; but the comment it drew down was of such a nature as at once to elicit from the author "a free and offenceless justification of a lately published and most maliciously misinterpreted poem;" a defence almost as amazing as the offence, and decidedly more amusing. The poet could never imagine till now so far-fetched a thought in malice ("such was my simplicity," he adds with some reason) as would induce any reader to regard as otherwise than "harmlessly and gracefully applicable to the occasion"—these are his actual words—the representation of "an innocent and spotless virgin (*sic*) rescued from the polluted throat of a monster, which I in this place applied to the savage multitude." Such is the perversity of man, that on perusing this most apt and judicious allegory "the base, ignoble, barbarous, giddy multitude" of readers actually thought fit to inquire from what "barren rock" the new Perseus might

be said to have unbound his fettered virgin; and in answer to this not unnatural inquiry Chapman had the audacious innocence to affirm—and I doubt not in all truth and simplicity—that the inevitable application of this happy and appropriate symbol had never so much as crossed his innocent mind. As if, he exclaims indignantly, the word "barren" could be applied to a man!—was it ever said a man was barren? or was the burden of bearing fruit ever laid on man?

Whether this vindication was likely under the circumstances to mend matters much "the prejudicate and peremptory reader" will judge for himself. One rumour however the poet repudiates in passing with some violence of language; to the effect, we may gather, that he had been waylaid and assaulted as was Dryden by Rochester's ruffians, but at whose instigation we can only conjecture. He will omit, he says, "as struck dumb with the disdain of it, their most unmanly lie both of my baffling and wounding, saying, 'Take this for your Andromeda;' not being so much as touched, I witness God, nor one syllable suffering."

The rumour is singular enough, and it would be curious to know if at least any such threat or attempt were actually made. From Carr at all events we can hardly believe that it would have come; for it must be set down to his credit that in the days of obscurity which followed on his disgrace and retirement he seems to have befriended the poet whose humbler chances of court favour had presumably fallen with his own.

It was unlikely that any man ever so slightly associated with the recollection of a matter which the king was probably of all men least desirous to keep in mind should again be summoned by two of the Inns of Court, as Chapman had been summoned the year before, to compose the marriage masque for a royal wedding. More inauspicious by far though far more innocent than those of Somerset were the nuptials he had then been chosen to celebrate; the nuptials of Elizabeth, called the Queen of Hearts, with Frederick, one day to be surnamed the Winter-King. For that fatal marriage-feast of "Goody Palsgrave" and her hapless bridegroom he had been bidden to provide due decorations of pageantry

and verse; and had produced at least some bright graceful couplets and stanzas, among others hardly so definable. But to such a task he was now not likely to be called again; the turning-point of his fortunes as far as they hung upon the chance of patronage at court was the wedding-day of Carr.

As a favourite of the dead prince to whom his Homer had been ascribed in weighty and worthy verses, he may have been thought fit the year before to assist as the laureate of a day at the marriage which had been postponed by the death of the bride's brother in the preceding autumn; and some remembrance of the favour shown him by the noble youth for whom the country if not the court had good reason to mourn may have kept his name for awhile before the eyes of the better part of the courtiers, if a better part there were; but if ever, as we may conjecture, his fortune had passed through its hour of rise and its day of progress, we must infer that its decline was sudden and its fall irremediable.

In the same year which witnessed the unlucky venture of his *Andromeda* Chapman put forth a

poem on the death of Lord Russell of Thornhaugh, a patron, it should seem, of a far other kind than Carr; distinguished as a soldier in the field now only memorable to us for the death of Sir Philip Sydney, where if report may be trusted his romantic or Homeric valour was worthy to have employed the pen of a translator of the Iliad; and yet more remarkable for the comparative justice and mercy displayed in his military administration of Ireland. This epicede, longer and more ornate than that issued two years before on Prince Henry, is neither much worse nor much better in substance and in style. Each may boast of some fine and vigorous verses, and both are notable as examples of the poet's somewhat troubled and confused elevation of thought and language. In *Eugenia* especially the same high note of moral passion alternates with the same sharp tone of contemptuous complaint that we find in *The Tears of Peace* and in the very last verses affixed by way of epilogue to his translation of the Hymns and other Homeric fragments. This bitterness of insinuation or invective against meaner scholars or artists we should set down rather to a

genuine hatred of bad work, a genuine abhorrence of base ambition and false pretence, than to any unjust or malevolent instinct of mere jealousy; which yet might perhaps be found pardonable to the neglected and laborious old age of a high-minded artist and hard-working scholar such as Chapman. There are impressive touches of a higher mood in the funeral hymn which completes the somewhat voluminous tribute of ceremonial verse offered up at the grave of Lord Russell; but the greater part of the poem is more noticeable for quaintness than for any better quality, being indeed eccentric in execution as in conception beyond the wont even of Chapman. It carries however some weight of thought, and contains probably the longest and minutest catalogue ever given in verse of the signs of an approaching storm; a description which shows at once the close and intense observation of nature, the keen and forcible power of reproduction, and the utter incompetence to select and arrange his material, alike and at all times distinctive of this poet.

Four years after the miscarriage of *Andromeda* we find his translation of Hesiod ushered in by a

dignified appeal and compliment to 'the truly Greek inspiration and absolutely Attic elocution' of no less a patron than Bacon; 'whose all-acknowledged faculty hath banished flattery therein even from the court; much more from my country and more than upland simplicity.' But for his Odyssey and Hymns of Homer, as well as for his plea addressed to the country on behalf of the beleaguered handful of troops serving with Sir Horace Vere, he sought or found no patronage but that of Carr; and that this should not have failed him gives evidence of some not ignoble quality in one whom we are accustomed only to regard as the unloveliest of the Ganymedes whose Jupiter was James. In the dedication of the Hymns he refers to the retired life of his disgraced patron in a tone which might not unworthily have saluted the more honourable seclusion of a better man. To these as to others of Chapman's moral verses Coleridge has paid a tribute of thoughtful and memorable praise, deserved no less by the fragments of ethical poetry printed some years earlier with a metrical version, after that of Petrarca, of the penitential Psalms. Among these there are

many grains of genuine thought, of terse and grave expression, worth remark and remembrance. So much indeed may be said in parting of Chapman's poetry as a whole; in all his poems of dedication or mere compliment, as in the elaborate and eloquent rhapsody prefixed to Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, we shall find some weight of reflection and some energy of utterance; in the commendatory verses of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* we shall find something better; four of the loveliest lines in the language, perfect for melody, purity, and simple sweetness of colour. It is better to think of Chapman as the just and generous friend of other and younger men's genius than to remark except in passing on his quarrel in old age with Jonson, of which we know nothing but by an unhappy fragment of virulent and worthless verse, transcribed it should seem during his last illness by some foolish and officious friend or flatterer (as we may conceive) of the old man's petulances and infirmities. For these there is reason to fear that we may have to make more allowance than must under all circumstances be claimed by age and sickness, even where adversity has no share in the

sufferings of the last years of a laborious and noble life. After the fall of Chapman's fortunes, if as I have conjectured we may suppose them to have risen for awhile under the patronage of Prince Henry and collapsed with the favour of Carr, he lived for twenty years without further success on the stage to which he had given so much of the best labour and the best faculty of his mind: and we may doubt whether the friends or patrons of his old age were numerous or generous enough to secure these latter years against neglect and obscurity. One comfort however must have been with him to the last, whether or not we agree with Gifford in accepting the apparent evidence for the poverty and solitude in which he died; the comfort of great work done, the recollection of high hopes attained, the evidence of daring dreams made real and fruitful of fame not yet to be. Some ten years before his death the poet of sixty-five could look on his completed version of all the Homeric poems, and say—

"The work that I was born to do is done."

It was a great work, and one wrought in a great

spirit; and if, as he says of Homer, not without evident and immediate reference to his own lot, 'like a man *verecundi ingenii* (which he witnesseth of himself), he lived unhonoured and needy till his death,' we may believe that he did not live dissatisfied or dejected. Unworthy indeed would the workman have been of his own work if from the contemplation of it he had been too poor in spirit or too covetous of reward to draw the consolation of a high content.

This strong and sovereign solace against all the evils that can beset the failing age and fallen fortunes of a brave man he surely deserved, if ever man deserved, to have and to retain. His work was done; neither time nor trouble could affect that; neither age nor misfortune could undo it. He had lived long and worked hard, and the end of all the valiant labour and strenuous endurance that must have gone to the performance of his task had not been less than triumphant. He had added a monument to the temple which contains the glories of his native language, the godlike images and the costly relics of its past; he had built himself a

massive and majestic memorial, where for all the flaws and roughness of the weatherbeaten work the great workmen of days unborn would gather to give honour to his name. He had kindled a fire which the changing winds of time were not to put out, the veering breath of taste and opinion was never to blow upon so hard but that some would return to warm themselves at its heat and to cheer themselves with its light. He showed what he could of Homer to the lifted eyes of Keats, and the strong and fiery reflection was to the greater poet as very dawn itself, the perfect splendour of Hellenic sunrise. Much of precious and undying praise has been worthily bestowed on it; but while anything of English poetry shall endure the sonnet of Keats will be the final word of comment, the final note of verdict on Chapman's Homer.

This of course was the sovereign labour of his life; and to this the highest of his other works can only be considered as bringing some addition of honour. That there is yet in these enough to serve as the foundation of a lasting fame I have made it the purpose of my present task to shew. But his

name will always first recall neither the plays nor the poems which might well have sufficed for the work and the witness of a briefer or less fruitful life; the great enterprise of which the firstfruits were given to the world in his fortieth year and the last harvest was garnered in his sixty-sixth must be the first and last claim of his memory on the reverence of all students who shall ever devote the best of their time and of their thought to loving research or to thankful labour in the full field of English poetry. The indomitable force and fire of Chapman's genius have given such breath and spirit to his Homeric poems that whatever their faults and flaws may be they are at least not those of other men's versions; they have a seed and salt of personal life which divide them from the class of translated works and remove them (it might wellnigh be said) into the rank of original poems. By the standard of original work they may be more fairly and more worthily judged than by the standard of pure translation · and upon their worth as tested by that standard the judgment of Coleridge and of Lamb has been passed once for all, without fear of

appeal or danger of reversal while the language in which the poems were written and the judgments given shall endure. To all lovers of high poetry the great old version of our Homer-Lucan must be dear for its own sake and for that of the men who have loved and held it in honour; to those who can be content with fire for light and force for harmony it must give pleasure inconceivable by such as cannot but remember and repine for the lack of that sweet and equal exaltation of style which no English poet of his age, and Chapman less than any, could hope even faintly to reproduce or to recall.

In his original poems the most turgid and barbarous writer of a time whose poets had almost every other merit in a higher degree than those Grecian gifts of perfect form, of perfect light, and of perfect measure, which are the marks of the Homeric poems no less than of the Sophoclean drama, he could not so put off his native sin of forced and inflated obscurity as to copy in the hot high colours of a somewhat strained and tattered canvas more than the outlines of the divine figures which his strong hand and earnest eye were bent to bring

before his readers' sight. It is much that his ardour and vigour, his energy and devotion, should have done the noble and memorable work they have. That 'unconquerable quaintness' which Lamb was the first to point out as the one perpetual note of infirmity and imperfection in the great work of Chapman is more hopelessly alien from the quality of the original than any other defect but that of absolute weakness or sterility of spirit could be. Altering the verdict of Bentley on Pope, we may say that instead of a very pretty it is a very noble poem, but it must not be called Homer. Quaintness and he, to steal a phrase from Juliet, are many miles asunder.

The temperament of Chapman had more in it of an Icelandic than a Hellenic poet's; and had Homer been no more than the mightiest of skalds or the Iliad than the greatest of sagas, Chapman would have been fitter to play the part of their herald or interpreter. His fiery and turbid style has in it the action rather of earthquakes and volcanoes than of the oceanic verse it labours to represent; it can give us but the pace of a giant for echo of the footfall of

a god; it can shew but the huge movements of the heaving earth, inflated and inflamed with unequal and violent life, for the innumerable unity and harmony, the radiant and buoyant music of luminous motion, the simplicity and equality of passion and of power, the majestic monochord of single sound underlying as it were at the heart of Homeric verse the multitudinous measures of the epic sea.

The name of Chapman should always be held great; yet must it always at first recall the names of greater men. For one who thinks of him as the author of his best play or his loftiest lines of gnomic verse a score will at once remember him as the translator of Homer or the continuator of Marlowe. The most daring enterprise of a life which was full of daring aspiration and arduous labour was this of resuming and completing the 'mighty line' of *Hero and Leander*. For that poem stands out alone amid all the wide and wild poetic wealth of its teeming and turbulent age, as might a small shrine of Parian sculpture amid the rank splendour of a tropic jungle. But no metaphor can aptly express

the rapture of relief with which you come upon it amid the poems of Chapman, and drink once more with your whole heart of that well of sweet water after the long draughts you have taken from such brackish and turbid springs as gush up among the sands and thickets of his verse. Faultless indeed this lovely fragment is not; it also bears traces of the Elizabethan barbarism, as though the great queen's ruff and farthingale had been clapped about the neck and waist of the Medicean Venus; but for all the strange costume we can see that the limbs are perfect still. The name of Marlowe's poem has been often coupled with that of the 'first heir' of Shakespeare's 'invention;' but with all reverence to the highest name in letters be it said, the comparison is hardly less absurd than a comparison of *Tamburlaine* with *Othello*. With all its overcrowding beauties of detail, Shakespeare's first poem is on the whole a model of what a young man of genius should not write on such a subject; Marlowe's is a model of what he should. Scarcely the art of Titian at its highest, and surely not the art of Shakespeare at its dawn, could have made accep-

table such an inversion of natural rule as is involved in the attempted violation by a passionate woman of a passionless boy; the part of a Joseph, as no less a moralist than Henri Beyle has observed in his great work on *Love*, has always a suspicion about it of something ridiculous and offensive: but only the wretchedest of artists could wholly fail to give charm to the picture of such a nuptial night as that of Hero and Leander. The style of Shakespeare's first essay is, to speak frankly, for the most part no less vicious than the matter: it is burdened and bedizened with all the heavy and fantastic jewellery of Gongora and Marini; too much of it is written in the style which an Italian scholar knows as that of the *seicentisti*, and which the duncery of New Grub Street in its immeasurable ignorance would probably designate as 'Della-Cruscan;' nay, there are yet, I believe, in that quarter rhymesters and libellers to be found who imagine such men as Guido Cavalcanti and Dante Alighieri to have been representative members of the famous and farinaceous academy. Not one of the faults chargeable on Shakespeare's beautiful but faultful

poem can justly be charged on the only not faultless poem of Marlowe. The absence of all cumbrous jewels and ponderous embroideries from the sweet and limpid loveliness of its style is not more noticeable than the absence of such other and possibly such graver flaws as deform and diminish the undeniable charms of *Venus and Adonis*. With leave or without leave of a much lauded critic who could see nothing in the glorified version or expansion by Marlowe of the little poem of Musæus but 'a paraphrase, in every sense of the epithet, of the most licentious kind,' I must avow that I want and am well content to want the sense, whatever it be, which would enable me to discern more offence in that lovely picture of the union of two lovers in body as in soul than I can discern in the parting of Romeo and Juliet. And if it be always a pleasure to read a page of Marlowe, to read it after a page of Chapman is to the capable student of high verse 'a pleasure worthy Xerxes the great king.' Yet there is not a little to be advanced in favour of Chapman's audacious and arduous undertaking. The poet was not alive, among all the mighty men then

living, who could worthily have completed the divine fragment of Marlowe. As well might we look now to find a sculptor who could worthily restore for us the arms of the Venus of Melos—'Our Lady of Beauty,' as Heine said when lying at her feet stricken to death, 'who has no hands, and cannot help us.' For of narrative poets there were none in that generation of any note but Drayton and Daniel; and though these might have more of Marlowe's limpid sweetness and purity of style, they lacked the force and weight of Chapman. Nor is the continuation by any means altogether such as we might have expected it to be—a sequel by Marsyas to the song of Apollo. Thanks, as we may suppose, to the high ambition of the poet's aim, there are more beauties and fewer deformities than I have found in any of his other poems. There are passages indeed which at first sight may almost seem to support the otherwise unsupported tradition that a brief further fragment of verse from the hand of Marlowe was left for Chapman to work up into his sequel. This for instance, though some-

what over fantastic, has in it a sweet and genuine note of fancy:

"Her fresh-heat blood cast figures in her eyes,
And she supposed she saw in Neptune's skies
How her star wander'd, wash'd in smarting brine,
For her love's sake, that with immortal wine
Should be embathed, and swim in more heart's-ease
Than there was water in the Sestian seas."

Here again is a beautiful example of the short sweet interludes which relieve the general style of Chapman's narrative or reflective verse:

"For as proportion, white and crimson, meet
In beauty's mixture, all right clear and sweet,
The eye responsible, the golden hair,
And none is held without the other fair;
All spring together, all together fade;
Such intermix'd affections should invade
Two perfect lovers."

And this couplet has an exquisite touch of fanciful colour:

"As two clear tapers mix in one their light,
So did the lily and the hand their white."

That at least might have been written by Marlowe himself. But the poem is largely deformed by excrescences and aberrations, by misplaced morals and mistimed conceits; and at the catastrophe,

perhaps half consciously oppressed and overcome by the sense that now indeed he must put forth all his powers to utter something not unworthy of what the 'dead shepherd' himself might have spoken over the two dead lovers, he does put forth all his powers for evil and for error, and gives such a narrative of their end as might have sufficed to raise from his grave the avenging ghost of the outraged poet who has been supposed—but unless it was said in some riotous humour of jesting irony, the supposition seems to me incredible—to have commended to Chapman, in case of his death, the task thus ill discharged of completing this deathless and half-accomplished work of a genius 'that perished in its pride.'

The faults and weaknesses of strong men seem usually an integral part of the character or the genius we admire for its strength; and the faults ingrained in the work of Chapman were probably indivisible from the powers which gave that work its worth. Those blemishes not less than those beauties of which the student is at almost every other step compelled perforce to take note, seem

inevitable by a poet's mind of his peculiar bent and bias. There are superfluities which we would fain see removed, deformities which we would fain see straightened, in all but the greatest among poets or men; and these are doubtless in effect irremovable and incurable. Even the Atlantean shoulders of Jonson, fit to bear the weight of mightiest monarchies, have been hardly tasked to support and transmit to our own day the fame of his great genius, overburdened as it was with the twofold load of his theories on art and his pedantries of practice. And Chapman, though also a brother of the giant brood, had not the Herculean sinews of his younger friend and fellow-student. That weight which could but bend the back that carried the vast world of invention whose twin hemispheres are *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* was wellnigh enough to crush the staggering strength of the lesser Titan. His style reels and struggles under the pressure; he snorts and heaves as Typhoeus beneath Etna, sending up at each huge turn and convulsion of his uneasy bulk some shower of blinding sparkles or volume of stifling vapour.

But for all the discords and contortions of his utterance the presence is always perceptible of a giant, and of one issued from the lineage of the early gods. He alone, as far as I can see, among all the great men of his great age, had anything in common with Jonson for good or evil. It would not be accurate to lay the heaviest faults of either poet to the account of his learning. A weight of learning at least equal to that which bowed and deformed the genius of Jonson and of Chapman served but to give new shape and splendour to the genius of Milton and of Landor. To these it was but as a staff to guide and a crown to glorify their labours; a lantern by whose light they might walk, a wellspring from whose water they might draw draughts of fresh strength and rest. But by this light the two elder poets too often failed to walk straight and sure, drank too often from this fountain a heady or a narcotic draught. One at least, and not he who had drunk deepest of the divine and dangerous spring, seems at times under its influence to move and speak as under some Circean transformation. The learning of Jonson,

doubtless far wider and sounder than that of Chapman, never allowed or allured him to exchange for a turbid and tortuous jargon the vigorous purity of his own English spirit and style. Nevertheless, of these four illustrious men whom I suppose to have been the most deeply read in classical literature, with the exception probably of Gray and possibly of Coleridge, among all our poets of the past, the two great republicans as surely were not as the two distinguished royalists surely were pedants: and Chapman, being the lesser scholar, was naturally the greater pedant of the pair.

As a dramatic poet he has assuredly never yet received his due meed of discerning praise; but assuredly no man of genius ever did so much, as though by perverse and prepense design, to insure a continuance of neglect and injustice. Had he allied himself with some enemy in a league against his own fame—had he backed himself against success for a wager, let his deserts be what they might —he could have done no more than he has done to make certain of the desired failure. With a fair share of comic spirit and invention, remarkable at

least in a poet of such a grave and ambitious turn of genius, he has spiced and larded his very comedies with the thick insipid sauce of pedantic declamation. Their savourless interludes of false and forced humour may indeed be matched even in the greatest of Jonson's works; there is here hardly anything heavier than the voluminous foolery of Scoto of Mantua and the dolorous long-winded doggerel drivelled forth by that dreary trinity of dwarf, eunuch, and hermaphrodite, whom any patron of less patience than Volpone, with a tithe of his wit and genius, would surely have scourged out of doors long before they were turned forth to play by Mosca. But when on a fresh reading we skip over these blocks laid as if on purpose in our way through so magnificent a gallery of comic and poetic inventions, the monument of a mind so mighty, the palace of so gigantic a genius as Ben Jonson's, we are more than content to forget such passing and perishable impediments to our admiration of that sovereign intellect which has transported us across them into the royal presence of its ruling and informing power. The "shaping

spirit of imagination" proper to all great men, and varying in each case from all other, reforms of itself its own misshapen work, treads down and triumphs over its own faults and errors, renews its faltering forces and resumes its undiminished reign. But he who in so high a matter as the dramatic art can sin so heavily, and so triumphantly tread under the penalty of his transgression, must be great among the greatest of his fellows. Such, with all his excesses and shortcomings in the way of dramatic work, was Jonson; such certainly was not Chapman. The tragedy for example of *Chabot*, a noble and dignified poem in the main, and the otherwise lively and interesting comedy of *Monsieur d'Olive*, are seriously impaired by a worse than Jonsonian excess in the analysis and anatomy of "humours." The turncoat advocate and the mock ambassador bestride the action of the plays and oppress the attention of the reader with a more "importunate and heavy load" than that of Sinbad's old man of the sea. Another point of resemblance to Jonson on the wrong side is the absence or in-

significance of feminine interest throughout his works. No poet ever showed less love or regard for women, less care to study or less power to paint them. With the exception of a couple of passages in his two best comedies, the wide field of Chapman's writings will be found wellnigh barren of any tender or noble trace of passion or emotion kindled between man and woman. These two passages stand out in beautiful and brilliant contrast to the general tone of the poet's mood; the praise of love has seldom been uttered with loftier and sweeter eloquence than in the well-known verses* which celebrate it as "nature's second sun," informing and educing the latent virtues in man "as the sun doth colours;" the structure and cadence of the verse, the choice and fullness of the words, are alike memorable for the perfect power and purity, the strong simplicity and luminous completeness of workmanship which may be (too rarely) found and enjoyed in the poetry of Chapman. The passage in *The Gentleman Usher* (act iv. scene 3) which

* *All Fools*, act i. scene 1.

sets forth the excellence of perfect marriage has less of poetic illustration and imaginative colour, but is a no less admirable model of clear and vigorous language applied to the fit and full expression of high thought and noble emotion. But as a rule we find the genius of Chapman at its best when furthest removed from female influence; as in the two plays of Biron and those nobler parts of the "Roman tragedy" of *Cæsar and Pompey* in which Cato discourses on life and death. The two leading heroines of his tragic drama, Tamyra and Caropia, are but a slippery couple of sententious harlots who deliver themselves in eloquent and sometimes in exalted verse to such amorous or vindictive purpose as the action of the play may suggest. Whether the secret of this singular defect in a dramatic poet were to be sought in coldness of personal temperament, in narrowness of intellectual interest, or simply in the accidental circumstances which may have given a casual direction to his life and thought, we need not now think to conjecture. He was ready enough to read lectures on love or lust, to expatiate with a dry scholastic sensuality on the details and

influences of form and colour, to apply the terms and subtleties of metaphysical definition to the physical anatomy of beauty; indeed, one at least of his poems may be described as a study in philosophic vivisection applied by a lover to his mistress, in which analysis and synthesis of material and spiritual qualities in action and reaction of cause and effect meet and confound each other—to say nothing of the reader. But of pure passion and instinctive simplicity of desire or delight there is little more trace than of higher emotion or deeper knowledge of such things as belong alike to mind and body, and hold equally of the spirit and the flesh.

Here again we find that Jonson and Chapman stand far apart from their fellow men of genius. The most ambitious and the most laborious poets of their day, conscious of high aims and large capacities, they would be content with no crown that might be shared by others; they had each his own severe and haughty scheme of study and invention, and sought for no excellence which lay beyond or outside it; that any could lie above, past the reach of their

strong arms and skilful hands, past the scope of their keen and studious eyes, they would probably have been unable to believe or to conceive. And yet there were whole regions of high poetic air, whole worlds of human passion and divine imagination, which might be seen by humbler eyes than theirs and trodden by feebler feet, where their robust lungs were powerless to breathe, and their strenuous song fell silent. Not greater spirits alone, such as Marlowe's and Shakespeare's, but such lesser spirits as Decker's had the secret of ways unknown to them in the world of poetry, the key of chambers from which they were shut out.

In Marlowe the passion of ideal love for the ultimate idea of beauty in art or nature found its perfect and supreme expression, faultless and unforced. The radiant ardour of his desire, the light and the flame of his aspiration, diffused and shed through all the forms of his thought and all the colours of his verse, gave them such shapeliness and strength of life as is given to the spirits of the greatest poets alone. He, far rather than Chaucer or Spenser, whose laurels were first fed by the dews and sun-

beams of Italy and France, whose songs were full of sweet tradition from oversea, of memories and notes which "came mended from their tongues,"—he alone was the true Apollo of our dawn, the bright and morning star of the full midsummer day of English poetry at its highest. Chaucer, Wyatt, and Spenser had left our language as melodious, as fluent, as flexible to all purposes of narrative or lyrical poetry as it could be made by the grace of genius; the supreme note of its possible music was reserved for another to strike. Of English blank verse, one of the few highest forms of verbal harmony or poetic expression, the genius of Marlowe was the absolute and divine creator. By mere dint of original and godlike instinct he discovered and called it into life; and at his untimely and unhappy death, more lamentable to us all than any other on record except Shelley's, he left the marvellous instrument of his invention so nearly perfect that Shakespeare first and afterwards Milton came to learn of him before they could vary or improve on it. In the changes rung by them on the keys first tuned by Marlowe we trace a remembrance of the touches of his hand;

in his own cadences we catch not a note of any other man's. This poet, a poor scholar of humblest parentage, lived to perfect the exquisite metre invented for narrative by Chaucer, giving it (to my ear at least) more of weight and depth, of force and fullness, than its founder had to give; he invented the highest and hardest form of English verse, the only instrument since found possible for our tragic or epic poetry; he created the modern tragic drama; and at the age of thirty he went

"Where Orpheus and where Homer are."

Surely there are not more than two or three names in any literature which can be set above the poet's of whom this is the least that can in simple truth be said. There is no record extant of his living likeness; if his country should ever bear men worthy to raise a statue or monument to his memory, he should stand before them with the head and eyes of an Apollo looking homeward from earth into the sun: a face and figure, in the poet's own great phrase,

"Like his desire, lift upward and divine."

To all things alike we find applied in turn this fervour of ideal passion; to the beauty of women, to the hunger after sway, to the thirst after knowledge, to the energy of friendship or ambition, to the energy of avarice or revenge. Sorrow and triumph and rapture and despair find in his poetry their most single and intense expression, extreme but not excessive; the pleasures and the pains of each passion are clothed with the splendour and harmony of pure conceptions fitted with perfect words. There is the same simple and naked power of abstract outline in every stroke of every study which remains to us from his hand; in the strenuous greed and fantastic hate of Barabas, in the hysteric ardours and piteous agonies of Edward, in the illimitable appetite of Tamburlaine for material rule and of Faustus for spiritual empire, and in the highest and haughtiest aspirations of either towards that ultimate goal of possession where he may lay hands on power unattainable and touch lips with beauty inexpressible by man, we trace the same ideal quality of passion. In the most glorious verses ever fashioned by a poet to express with

subtle and final truth the supreme aim and the supreme limit of his art, the glory and the joy of his labour, the satisfaction and the insufficience of his triumph in the partial and finite expression of an infinite delight and an indefinite desire, Marlowe has summed up all that can be said or thought on the office and the object, the means and the end, of this highest form of spiritual ambition, which for him was as it were shadowed forth in all symbols and reflected in all shapes of human energy, in all exaltations of the spirit, in all aspirations of the will. Being a poet of the first order, he was content to know and to accept the knowledge that ideal beauty lies beyond the most perfect words that art can imbue with life or inflame with colour; an excellence that expression can never realize, that possession can never destroy. The nearer such an artist's work comes to this abstract perfection of absolute beauty, the more clearly will he see and the more gladly will he admit that it never can come so near as to close with it and find, as in things of meaner life, a conclusion set in the act of fruition to the sense of enjoyment, a goal fixed at a point

attainable where the delight of spiritual desire may be consummated, and consumed in the moment of its consummation. A man of the second order of genius is of his nature less quick to apprehend the truth that

> "If all the pens that ever poets held
> Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,"

and if one single and supreme poem could embody in distilled expression the spirit and the sense of

> "every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
> Their minds, and muses on admired themes,"

there would remain behind all things attainable and expressible in sound or form or colour something that will not be expressed or attained, nor pass into the likeness of any perishable life; but though all were done that all poets could do,

> "Yet should there hover in their restless heads
> One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
> Which into words no virtue can digest."

No poet ever came nearer than Marlowe to the expression of this inexpressible beauty, to the incarnation in actual form of ideal perfection, to the

embodiment in mortal music of immortal harmony; and he it is who has left on record and on evidence to all time the truth that no poet can ever come nearer. The lesser artist, with less liberty of action, will be the likelier of the two to show less loyalty of submission to the eternal laws of thought which find their full and natural expression in the eternal canons of art. In him we shall find that intellectual energy has taken what it can of the place and done what it can of the work proper to ideal passion. This substitution of an intellectual for an ideal end, of energetic mental action for passionate spiritual emotion as the means towards that end, is as good a test as may be taken of the difference in kind rather than in degree between the first and the second order of imaginative artists. By the change of instrument alone a critic of the higher class may at once verify the change of object. In almost every page of Chapman's noblest work we discern the struggle and the toil of a powerful mind convulsed and distended as by throes of travail in the effort to achieve something that lies beyond the proper aim and the possible scope of that form of

art within which it has set itself to work. The hard effort of a strong will, the conscious purpose of an earnest ambition, the laborious obedience to a resolute design, is as perceptible in Jonson and Chapman as in Shakespeare and in Marlowe is the instinct of spiritual harmony, the loyalty and the liberty of impulse and of work. The lesser poets are poets prepense; the greater are at once poets of their own making and of nature's, equidistant in their line of life from the mere singing-bird and the mere student. Of the first order we may be sure that in any age or country the men that compose it must have been what they were, great as poets or artists, lyric or dramatic; of the second order we may well believe that in a different time or place the names which we find written in its catalogue might have been distinguished by other trophies than such as they now recall. And this, which may seem to imply a superiority of intellectual power, does actually imply the reverse. Those are not the greatest among men of whom we can reasonably conceive that circumstance might have made them as great in some different way from that in which

they walked; those are not the highest poets or soldiers or statesmen whom it is possible or permissible to imagine as winning equal fame in some other field than their own, by the application to some other end of such energy and genius as made them great in the line which they were impelled to select at least as much by pressure of accident as by force of instinct, by the external necessity of chance as by the internal necessity of nature. Accident and occasion may be strongest with men of the second order; but with minds of the first rank that which we call the impulse of nature is yet more strong than they. I doubt not that Jonson might in another age have sought and won distinction from the active life of soldiership or of statecraft; I take leave to doubt whether Shakespeare, had he sought it, would have won. I am not disinclined to admit the supposition that Chapman might have applied his power of moral thought and his interest in historic action to other ends than they ever served in literature or in life. But neither for his sake nor for ours am I disposed to regret that circumstance or destiny should have impelled or in-

duced him to take instead that way of work which has given his memory a right to live with that of men who could never have taken another way than they took; which has made it honourable and venerable to all who have any reverence for English poetry or regard for English fame; which has set him for ever in the highest place among the servants and interpreters of Homer, and allowed us to inscribe in our imagination, as on the pedestal of a statue reared in thought to the father of our tragic verse, the name of George Chapman not too discreditably far beneath the name of Christopher Marlowe.

# APPENDIX.

THE following list of passages extracted from Chapman's poems by the editor of the Elizabethan anthology published in 1600 under the name of *England's Parnassus, or the choicest Flowers of our Modern Poets,* was drawn up from my own copy of the original edition before I was aware that a similar list had been compiled by Mr. J. P. Collier to accompany and illustrate a private reprint of the book. From this source I learn that one extract given at p. 312 as from Chapman is in fact taken from the *Albion's England* of Warner; as indeed, though acquainted only with fragmentary excerpts from that poem, I had already conjectured that it must be. This is preceded by another extract signed

with the name of Chapman, which according to Mr. Collier is discoverable in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense;* but after a second and third search through every turn and recess of that dense and torrid jungle of bad and good verses I have failed to light on this particular weed or flower. Five other extracts have baffled alike my own researches and the far more capable inquisition of even Mr. Collier's learning; nor have they proved traceable by the energy and enthusiasm of Chapman's latest editor, who has properly included them in his text as authentic fragments of unknown poems by the writer to whom four of them have been assigned by Robert Allot, the editor of *England's Parnassus.* The second of these five passages he ascribes to Spenser; Spenser's it undoubtedly is not; and as it is followed by an excerpt from Chapman's *Hero and Leander*, which is likewise bestowed on Spenser by the too hasty liberality of the old editor, we have some additional reason to rely on the unmistakable evidence of the style, which bears immediate witness to the peculiar handiwork of Chapman.

The last excerpt but one seems familiar to me, and

is rather in the manner of Greene or Peele and their fellows than of Chapman or any later poet; I cannot but think that a student more deeply read than I in the poems interspersed among the romances of Greene and Lodge might be able to trace both the two last passages of the five here fathered on Chapman to the hand of one or the other. They have the fluency or fluidity rather of the blank verse written by the smaller scholastic poets whom we may see grouped about the feet of Marlowe; the same facile profusion and effusion of classic imagery, the same equable elegance and graceful tenuity of style, crossed here and there by lines of really high and tender beauty. It may be thought that in that case they would have been as speedily and as surely tracked by Mr. Collier as were the verses transferred from Warner to Chapman; but the most learned and acute among scholars cannot always remember the right place for all things on which his eye must have lit in the course of a lifelong study; and I find in Mr. Collier's list two passages, one given at p. 22 of *England's Parnassus* under the heading 'Bliss,' the other at p. 108 under the heading 'Gifts,' marked

as of unknown origin, of which the first occurs in the fifth sestiad of Chapman's *Hero and Leander*, the second in his *Shadow of Night*. These in the list that follows are assigned to their proper places. The number of the page referred to on the left is that in *England's Parnassus;* the number on the right refers to the page in which the same passage appears in the first edition of Chapman's collected poems.

*List of Passages extracted from Chapman's Poems in* England's Parnassus; or, the Choicest Flowers of our Modern Poets. 1600.

| PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 3. | The golden chain of Homer's high device . | 6 |
| 9. | Things senseless live by art, and rational die. . . . . | 77 |
| 12. | Sacred beauty is the fruit of sight . | 29 |
| 15. | All excellence of shape is made for sight . | 33 |
| | *(In the next line E. P. reads:* 'To be a beetle else were no defame.') | |
| 16. | Rich Beauty, that each lover labours for | 30, 31 |
| „ | O Beauty, still thy empire swims in blood | 31 |
| 17. | *Beauty enchasing love, love gaining beauty . . . . . | 29 |

* E. P. has three misprints in this extract: 'gaining' for 'gracing,' 'conflict' for 'constant,' 'time content' for 'true

| PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 17. | This beauty fair* is an enchantment made | 29 |
| 19. | Beauty (in) heaven and earth this grace doth win . . . . . | 76 |
| 20. | O Beauty, how attractive is thy power! . | 31 |
| 21. | So respected | |
| | Was Bashfulness in Athens . . . | 86 |
| „ | Preferment seldom graceth Bashfulness . | 83 |
| 22. | Hard it is | |
| | To imitate a false and forgèd bliss . . | 82 |
| „ | Bliss not in height doth dwell . | 90 |
| 38. | All wealth and wisdom rests in true content† . . . . . | 29 |
| 40. | Action is fiery valour's sovereign good . | 85 |

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content;' but in a later extract at p. 38 it gives the right reading, and cites the two first lines of the stanza following, which with the third and fourth are here omitted. It attempts however to correct two seeming errors in the fifth and sixth; reading 'is' for 'in' and 'thrones' for 'thorns': but in the first instance the text will be found right if the punctuation be corrected by striking out the period at the end of the line preceding; and 'thorns' may be taken to mean the harsh doctrines of the stoics subsequently referred to. In the ninth line of this unlucky stanza E. P. misprints 'grave' for 'graven.'

* So E. P. for 'beauty's fair;' and in v. 5 reads 'fault' for 'fate,' and in v. 8 'god self-love' for 'good self-love.'

† In this extract E. P. corrects 'Bend in our circle' to 'Bound;' a reading which seems to me preferable.

| PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 47. | Round-headed custom th' apoplexy is* . | 74 |
| 56. | In things without us no delight is sure . | 76 |
| 67. | Fierce lightning from her eyes . | 80 |
| 68. | Begin where lightness will, in shame it ends . . . . . | 80 |
| 108. | Good gifts are often given to men past good . . . . . | 13 |
| 110. | Kind Amalthea was transformed by Jove. | 5 |
| 120. | Good deeds in case that they be evil placed† . . . . . | ? |
| 141. | Many use temples to set godly faces. . | ? |
| 161. | The‡ noblest born dame should industrious be . . . . . | 86 |
| 164. | Inchastity is ever prostitute . . . . | 15 |
| 170. | They double life that dead things' grief sustain . . . . . | 77 |
| 172. | Love is a golden bubble, full of dreams . | 74 |

* This is the reading in E. P. of the line

'But custom, that the apoplexy is ;'

the two following lines are transcribed exactly as they stand in the third sestiad of *Hero and Leander*.

† This extract runs thus in E. P. :

'Good deeds, in case that they be evil placed,
Ill deeds are reckonèd, and soon disgraced.
That is a good deed that prevents a bad.'

The third line occurs in the third sestiad of *Hero and Leander* (p. 76).

‡ So E. P. for 'And.'

| PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 174. | Love is a wanton famine, rich in food . | 35 |
| 178. | Love laws and judges hath in fee . . | 49 |
| 180. | Love paints his longings in sweet virgins' eyes . . . . . | 87 |
| 181. | Trifling attempts no serious acts advance . | 77 |
| 183. | Pure love, said she, the purest grace pursues . . . . . | 34 |
| 196. | What doth make man without the parts of men . . . . . | 5 |
| 197. | Like as rude painters that contend to show | 6 |
| 198. | Hymen that now is god of nuptial rights* | 82 |
| „ | Before them on an altar he presented . | 86 |
| „ | In Athens† | |
| | The custom was that every maid did wear | 86 |
| 208. | The mind hath in itself‡ a deity . . | 15 |
| „ | That mind most is beautiful and high | 16 |
| 221. | We must in matters moral quite reject . | 32 |
| 230. | Too much desire to please pleasure divorces . . . . . | 28 |
| 260. | Like§ as a glass is an inanimate eye. . | 74 |
| 271. | None is so poor of sense and eyne To whom a soldier doth not shine . . | 45 |

* So E. P. for 'rites.'

† These two words are interpolated by the editor of E. P.

‡ So E. P. for 'herself.'

§ So E. P. for 'For;' and in the next verse 'outwardly' for 'inwardly.'

PAGE PAGE

271. No elegancie* can beautify . . . 44

273. Every good motion that the soul awakes . ?

274. As Phœbus throws
His beams abroad though he in clouds be closed . . . . . 74

(*These two are attributed to Spenser in E. P.*)

285. Time's golden thigh
Upholds the flowery body of the earth . 72

292. Virtue makes honour, as the soul doth sense . . . . . 32

„ Joy graven in sense like snow in water wastes . . . . . 72

295. Good vows are never broken with good deeds . . . . . 76

„ We know not how to vow till love unblind us . . . . . 76

297. Use makes things nothing huge, and huge things nothing . . . . . 32

303. Wisdom and the sight of heavenly things
Shines not so clear as earthly vanities
(*Blind Beggar of Alexandria,* Sc. i.)

305. Best loves are lost for wit, when men blame fortune . . . . . 32

308. Words well placed move things were never thought . . . . . 32

* So E. P. for 'elegance.'

PAGE PAGE

312. Their virtues mount like billows to the skies . . . . . ?

„ Women were made for this intent, to put us into pain.

(Warner's *Albion's England.*)

314. Women never
Love beauty in their sex, but envy ever . 83

„ Women are most won when men merit least* . . . . . 83

321. Nothing doth the world so full of† mischief fill . . . . . 82

324. The gentle humorous night
Implies‡ her middle course, and the sharp east . . . . . ?

355. With a brace of silver hinds . 9

356. Nature's bright eyesight, and the world's fair soul. . . . . 10

* In the third line of this extract E. P. reads 'Love's *proper* lesson' instead of '*special.*'

† So E. P. The right reading of this beautiful couplet is:

'Ah, nothing doth the world with mischief fill,
But want of feeling one another's ill.'

*Hero and Leander*, 5th sestiad.

(E. P. prints 'will' for 'ill.')

‡ This word alone would suffice to vindicate the authenticity of the fragment. It recurs perpetually in the poems of Chapman, who always uses it in the same peculiar and licentious manner.

| PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 357. | Amongst this gamesome crew is seen . | 48 |
| 366. | In flowery season of the year . . . | 43 |
| | (*With two lines prefixed at bottom of preceding page*— The tenth of March when Aries received Dan Phœbus' rays into his horned head.) | |
| 372. | Day's king, God of undaunted verse | 81 |
| 379. | All suddenly a light of twenty hues. | 72, 73 |
| 395. | She lay, and seemed a flood of diamant | 29, 30 |
| | (*Omitting* 'Now Ovid's muse—to make me better.') | |
| 399. | Their soft young cheek-balls to the eye . | 47 |
| 407. | To make the wondrous power of love appear . . . . . | 36 |
| 409. | *Then cast she off her robe and stood upright . . . . . | 23 |
| „ | Herewith she rose, like the autumnal star. | 31 |
| 417. | See where she issues in her beauty's pomp. | ? |
| „ | Her hair was loose, and 'bout her shoulders hung | ? |
| 422. | Like† as a taper burning in the dark . | 31 |
| „ | Now as when heaven is muffled with the vapours . . . . . | 33 |

* In the third line of this stanza *England's Parnassus* reads 'her night' for 'the night'; in the eighth 'choisefull' for 'charmful;' in the ninth 'varnishing' for 'vanishing.'

† So E. P. for 'and.'

| PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 424. | As when Jove at once from east to* west . . . . . | 33 |
| 464. | As she was looking in a glass† . . | 32 |
| 469. | In little time these ladies found . . | 47 |
| 481 (*Misprinted* 465). | In that mead-proud-making grass . . . . | 41, 42 |
| 485. | A soft enflowered bank embraced the fount | 23 |
| 488. | Grim Melampus with the Ethiop's feet | 13 |

There are thus in this anthology no less than eighty-one extracts ascribed to Chapman, besides two of which one is known and the other suspected to be the work of his hand; these are wrongly assigned to Spenser. At the time of this publication Chapman was in his forty-second year; he had published but two plays and three volumes of verse, the third being his continuation of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.

Of the eighty-three passages numbered above, thirty-two are taken from this poem, twenty-five from *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, ten from *The Shadow of Night*, eight from *The Contention of Phillis and Flora*, a quaint and sometimes a graceful version

* So E. P. for 'and.' † '*Her* glass' in the text.

into the Elizabethan dialect of a Latin or more probably a quasi-Latin poem ascribed by Ritson to one of the most famous among mediæval masters; one is taken from the first scene of his first play, one is spurious, and six (including the passage wrongly referred in a former list to *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*), whether spurious or genuine, have yet to be traced to their true source. In his critical memoir of Marlowe (*Works*, vol. i. p. lvii. ed. 1850), Mr. Dyce observes that 'the editor of *England's Parnassus* appears never to have resorted to manuscript sources;' and if, as is of course most probable, the supposition of that great scholar and careful critic be well founded, we must conclude that these passages, as well as the more precious and exquisite fragment of a greater poet which called forth this remark from his editor, were extracted by Allot from some printed book or books long lost to human sight. One small but noticeable extract of two lines and a half descriptive of midnight is evidently I think from a lost play. The taste of the worthy person who compiled this first English anthology was remarkable apparently for its equal relish of

good verse and bad; but we may be grateful that it was by no means confined to the more popular and dominant authors of his age, such as Spenser and Sidney; since his faculty of miscellaneous admiration has been the means of preserving many curious fragments of fine or quaint verse, and occasionally a jewel of such price as the fragment of Marlowe which alike for tone of verse and tune of thought so vividly recalls Shelley's poem, *The Question*, written in the same metre and spirit, that one is tempted to dream that some particles of the 'predestined plot of dust and soul' which had once gone to make up the elder must have been used again in the composition of the younger poet, who in fiery freedom of thought and speech was like no other of our greatest men but Marlowe, and in that as in his choice of tragic motive was so singularly like this one.

THE END.

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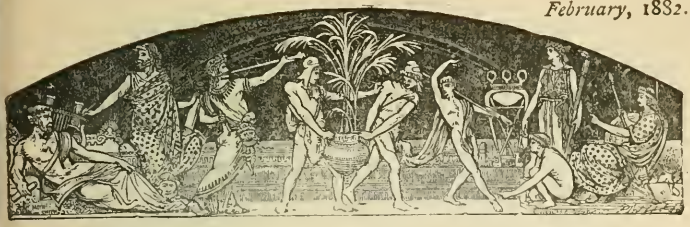

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